J. Walsh Lewisham-Kent.

THE Sincere and Zealous PRACTICE OF RELIGION Recommended.

In Consideration of the Certainty of its Principles, The Reasonableness of its Duties; and the great Wisdom of Mankind in serving God. With respect both to the Advantages of this Life, and the Recompences of the next.

To which is added,

A Brief Account how those who incline to Religion, may best bring their Good Desires to Good Effect.

By John Turner, Lecturer of *Christ-Church*, *London*, and Chaplain to the Right Honourable, the Earl of *Scarbrough*.

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TO THE

Right Honourable

THE

Counteſs of Scarbrough.

May it pleaſe your Honour,

FAvourably to admit this Humble Dedication of a ſmall Diſcourſe; in which if the Performance were but anſwerable to the Subject of which it treats: I could aſſure my ſelf that it would be welcome and well pleaſing. For as Religion is the greateſt Concernment of Mankind, You Madam, are One of thoſe Happy Perſons that eſteem it ſo.

And tho too Modeſt, and too Humble to be Delighted in your own Praiſes, You will yet, I hope, give me leave to take notice, that it was your Hearty Zeal for Practical Religion, that ſo endeared you to a Royal, Wiſe, and Religious Princeſs, with whom none but the Virtuous, and the Good had Favour. To a Queen that ought never to be mentioned without great Admiration of her Singular, and Extraordinary Virtues; and a laſting Sorrow for the Loſs, which not our Church and Nation only, but Religion it ſelf Suſtains in the want of her Royal Authority to Defend, and the Greater Influence of her Bright Example to Promote it. Under whoſe Wiſe and Awful Conduct we ſaw the Scornful Atheiſt humbled; the Bold Abettors of Profaneneſs ſilent; Debauchery ſuppreſt; and not the Face only, but the Spirit of Chriſtianity ſpreading apace, by an Efficacious Influence

from

from the Higher Powers. And the loſs of ſo Rare, ſo Bright, and ſo Eminent a Pattern is too Senſible an Affliction, too Mournful a Calamity to be ſoon forgotten.

Madam,

When I firſt entertain'd Thoughts of Publiſhing ſuch a Treatiſe, I was the more eaſily induc'd to Reſolve upon it, by an hearty Deſire I had of ſerving your Noble Family, and not to bear the Character of a Relation to it in vain. And having upon repeated Occaſions underſtood My Lords and Your Earneſt Care, and Hearty Concernment that the Numerous, and Ingenuous Offspring with which Divine Providence has Bleſs'd you both, might be preſerved from the Infectious Corruptions of the Vicious Age, and Adorn their Noble Birth, and Curious Parts with the trueſt Accompliſhments of Wiſdom, Virtue and Piety: I thought it might be ſome

Advantage to the laſt, to ſet before them a ſhort Account on what ſtrong Foundation Religion ſtands; what Good Reaſons Men have to be Mindful of it; and what Certain, and Lamentable Miſeries are likely to attend thoſe that ſhall Deſpiſe it.

The firſt thing commonly askt about any New Book is, what there is in it Novel, what Curious; and if little of this is to be expected here: perhaps the Univerſal Thirſt after theſe things is one Cauſe of the Decay of Practical Religion. However, Plainneſs is more ſutable than Fineneſs and Curioſity, where Univerſal Uſe and Benefit are aimed at. If ſuch as it is, it ſhall be favourably Accepted, and become helpful to the Good Deſign for which it is intended: I ſhall think my Labour well employ'd, and Bleſs God for the Good Succeſs.

I have this moreover to Rejoyce in, that I have hereby an Opportunity of Profeſſing, how ſincerely I am Devoted

voted to the Service of your Right Honourable Lord, and You. And that God would Graciouſly be pleaſed long to Preſerve and Proſper you both; and to fulfil all your Wiſhes in his Choiceſt Bleſſings on thoſe Flouriſhing, and Lovely Branches that are deſcended from you, and Crown theſe Joys with thoſe that ſhall be Everlaſting: is the Hearty Deſire and Earneſt Prayer of,

Madam,

Your Honours

Moſt Obedient, and

Moſt Humble,

Servant and Chaplain,

J. TURNER.

THE

THE

CONTENTS.

THE *Introduction.* page 1

CHAP. I.

The Truth of Religion, and the Certainty of its Principles the First Motive to it. What Evidence here to be expected. The certainty of God's Existence, from the Creation of Things; Miracles, Prophecy, Conſcience, and Univerſal Conſent. His Providence proved from his Attributes. The Application of this. p. 6

CHAP. II.

The Certainty of a Future State, from our Natural Apprehenſions of Rewards and Puniſhments; The Neceſſity of it to vindicate God's Juſtice, and Holineſs; From Scripture; The Improvement of all this. p. 49

CHAP. III.

The Reaſonableneſs of Religious Duties; in what that conſiſts; Evident in every Particular; The Hardſhip of Mortifying

ing our Appetites answered. And of suffering Persecution. The Force of this to engage us to Obedience. p. 81

CHAP. IV.

The Advantages of Religion to the Present Happiness of Mankind. God Originally Created and Design'd us for this. Sin certainly Destructive of it; Religion much promotes it. The Peculiar Promises of God thereto. The Objection from the Afflictions of Good Men answered. The Comforts of Life proceed not from External Things alone. Much less from the Pleasures of Sin. The Joys of a Good Conscience. p. 131

CHAP. V.

The most Prevalent Motive to a Holy Life is from the Rewards and Punishments of the next World. What Common Reason teaches us concerning them. What the Holy Scriptures. The true Nature of our Celestial Felicity not completely discovered, and why. There shall be a Total exemption from all Sorrow; in the Presence of God and Angels; And a Glorious Change in our Natures, by restoring the Image of God in us. By what Comparisons it is represented. Its Properties. The Application of all this. p. 196

CHAP. VI.

The Contents.

CHAP. VI.

The laſt Motive is from the Fear of Eternal Condemnation. What Torments then to be expected; Whether Hell Conſiſts of Real Fire. The Torments then to be Eternal. That not Impoſſible; nor Inconſiſtent with the Divine Attributes, and Ends of Puniſhing. An Immortal Creature if Miſerable muſt be ſo Eternally. The Force of this Conſideration. p. 250

CHAP. VII.

Men that incline to be Religious may yet find it Difficult to bring their Good Deſires to Good Effect. A certain incapacity contracted by Vicious Habits. Not to be conquered but by the Aſſiſtance of Divine Grace. How this to be obtained and improved. p. 293

The Cloſe. p. 335

The

Miſtakes in the Printing to be Corrected.

Page.	Line.	for	Read
4	28	to	thro
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9	30	Iſindelity	Infidelity
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88	12	Evidence	Evince
90	17	*after* that	of the
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100	17	Principle	Principal
112	17	have	having
122	10	Virtue	Virtues
129	28	Evidence	evince
130	12	State	Fate
132	13	whether	while
135	18	their	and the
141	15	Chirurgeons	Surgeons
152	27	which that	that which
183	13	*after* Look	for
205	16	The	Their
250	Margin.	Hebrews	Hoſea
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293	3	eternally	extremely
296	26	*after* or	three
304	30	entice	incite

The Sincere and Zealous

PRACTICE OF RELIGION

Recommended, &c.

The Introduction.

EVery Chriſtian who is himſelf ſincere in his Religion, muſt be heartily grieved to look into the World, and obſerve the great wickedneſs of Mankind. To ſee the generality of Men, ſo wholly taken up in their Care, and Solicitude about this preſent Life, as to neglect the one thing neceſſary, and make little or no Proviſion for Eternity. To find many yet more extravagant, and ſo entirely devoted to the Sordid Plea-

ſures of Fleſh and Senſe, as to become for their ſakes Bankrupts in their Fortune, Infamous in their Character, Putrified in their Bodies, uneaſy and diſquieted in their Minds; and thereby to loſe all the True and Valuable Felicity of this World, as well as that which is to come.

Whoever Contemplates the Frame and Conſtitution of Humane Nature, the Powers and Faculties of our Souls; our Underſtanding, Reaſon, and the Laws of Conſcience within, Ruling and Directing the outward Actions; and Rewarding every Work according to its Worth, with Peace or with Remorſe: Muſt in theſe Contemplations ſee, that Man was certainly made for better Purpoſes; for Works of Piety and Devotion; and his Life deſign'd a Life of Virtue and Religion.

But good God, what ſtrange Prevarications! Inſtead of Piety behold Profaneneſs, and almoſt an univerſal Deluge of Vice and Naughtineſs diffuſed through our whole Race. Inſtead of Worſhip and Adoration, behold Contempt and Blaſphemies; horrid Oaths, and dire Impre-

Imprecations, in loud Peals ſhot at Heaven, with ſuch audacious, haughty inſolence; that it makes thoſe *Grecian* Fables of Gyants Storming Heaven, appear too like Prophetick Accounts, of the Daring, Bold Impieties of Wicked and Ungodly Chriſtians.

The Cauſes of this are not the ſame in all; in ſome it is from looſe and wicked Principles; And yet, had theſe Vices proceeded only from the Real or Pretended Atheiſts, that would diſpute the Being of a God; they would have been, whether more Excuſable or no I know not; but certainly to be beheld with much leſs Wonder and Surprize. For then the Principles and Actions of Men had been all of a Peice; and we might have hop'd, that the ſame Arguments that had confuted their Errors, might alſo have Reform'd their Lives. But that which creates the moſt aſtoniſhing Amazement, is, that theſe abominable, hateful Crimes are found among thoſe who believe a God, and profeſs Religion. Nay, which is yet much worſe, among Chriſtians, who profeſs a Religion that has

more force to make Men good, than any other upon Earth whatever. A Religion that binds us by the ſtrongeſt Obligations; that invites us with the moſt earneſt Importunity; that ſoftens us by Kindneſs; that encourages us with Hope; that by the Aſſiſtances of Grace makes us Able; and does what is fit to be done, by the fear of Hell and the expectation of Heaven, to make us Willing to be Good. This is the wonder, that the Profeſſors of ſuch a Religion ſhou'd live Irregular and Vicious Lives.

But in this we ſee, that as the beſt and moſt Specific Medicine cannot operate unleſs duly and ſeaſonably applied: So the beſt and ſtrongeſt Arguments cannot otherwiſe effectually perſuade, than by due and ſerious Conſideration. And therefore after all that God has done to Reclaim Mankind, and reconcile us to our Duty, it ſhall become all of no Force: unleſs Men will ſeriouſly conſider, and carefully attend to the Obligations he has laid upon them. It is to the want of ſuch ſerious Application of our Thoughts, to the Reaſonableneſs and Excellencies of Chriſt-

Chriſtianity; to its Divine Authority and Truth; to the Conſequences that will certainly attend the Practice of it on the one hand, and the Neglect of it on the other: It is the want of theſe Reflections, that the Kingdom of Darkneſs has been eſtabliſhed, and Iniquity abounded, and ſuch Numbers of miſerable Mankind periſht by their Sins; that by compliance with the gracious Ordinances of God, might have attained to the Eternal Salvation of their Souls.

My preſent Deſign then being, to recommend Religion to the more ſerious Conſideration of Men, and thereby to engage them to be more zealous in it; and Faithfully to endeavour after that Virtue and Goodneſs, and Holineſs which it was Originally deſign'd to bring into, and Eſtabliſh in the World: It will be neceſſary for me to proceed in this Method.

I. To Examine the Truth and Certainty of its Principles.

II. The Reaſonableneſs and Excellency of its Duties.

III. And laſtly, The great Wiſdom of Mankind in living up thereto; upon the Account of the Bleſ-

ſings, and great Advantages that attend it here, and its more Glorious Rewards hereafter. And if all theſe be fairly made out, Men cannot but apprehend the danger of a Wicked Life; and how inexcuſable they are, who obſtinately continue in it.

CHAP. I.

The Truth and Certainty of the Principles of Religion.

I. THE Firſt Motive to Religion, ariſes from the Truth and Certainty of its Principles. For nothing in the World can juſtifie Men in taking it up only for a Diſguiſe, and living in a neglect of its Precepts and Duties: but only Falſhood and Impoſture in the Foundation of it. If all Religion were a Deluſion, and a Cheat; the off-ſpring of Prieſtcraft, or States-Men, to over-awe the World; as ſome Men have Impiouſly pretended: Then I muſt confeſs, Sincerity were ſuperfluous; Diſſimulation commendable; and the greateſt

greateſt Hypocrites, the moſt truly Religious. But if theſe Wiſe Gentlemen be miſtaken in their Notions: *Where is the hope of the Hypocrite when God ſhall take away his Soul?* If Religion be no Deceit; if its Doctrines are True, and its Principles certain: then Diſſimulation is ſo Vile a thing, that the Conditions of Diſſemblers muſt be wretchedly Forlorn. *Job.* 27. 8.

In the managing therefore of this Matter, I ſhall

I. Endeavour to ſhew what manner of Evidence we are to expect of the Truth of Religion in General. And then,

II. The Sufficiency and Certainty of the Evidence which we have.

III. And Laſtly, Apply each of theſe Conſiderations to our purpoſe.

I. I ſhall endeavour to ſhew what manner of Evidence we are to expect of the Trurh of Religion in General. This I mention, to prevent Miſtakes and Prejudices againſt it. For as all things are not capable of the ſame Evidence, and Proof: So in Religion we are only to expect Moral Certainty, and Moral Arguments. *What Evidence in Religion is to be expected.*

That is, not ſuch as carry Neceſſary, and Invincible Conviction, that ſhall force aſſent, and cannot be withſtood; but ſuch only as are Clear and ſtrong enough to Convince Impartial and Ingenious Lovers of Truth; and thoſe who don't ſuffer their Underſtandings to be Blinded, nor their Judgments to be Corrupted, and Perverted; by their Luſts and Vices.

And the Reaſon why we are to expect no more, is this; becauſe, Faith is propoſed to us as a Virtue, and Religion, not as an Act of Neceſſity, but of Will and Choice; by which we become capable of Rewards and Puniſhments; of Joy and Torments. Now no Man is either Commended, or Rewarded for ſeeing the Light, or hearing Sounds, or feeling Heat or Cold. Becauſe theſe Actions are Neceſſary, and proceed not from our Will. We See, and Hear, and Feel whether we will or no; ſo that if the Evidence of Religion did in the ſame manner Force Aſſent, it could not in Wiſdom be the condition of our Happineſs; Nor could we with any Reaſon, be commended

mended for our Faith, or rewarded for our Obedience. For neither the one nor the other wou'd be Voluntary.

As therefore Religion is a means of Salvation; and Piety the Condition of our future Happineſs: We are to look for no more than a Moral, Rational Evidence; an Evidence clear enough to convince thoſe who are Willing, and Upright; who will hearken to Reaſon, rather than to Luſt; and not ſuffer their Minds to be depraved, and their Judgments to be byaſs'd by the Corruption of heir Manners, and their ſtrong Inclinations to the Pleaſures of Sin.

We are then you ſee to Regulate our Expectations of the Proofs and Evidences of the Truth of Religion. Indeed when we conſider with what Confidence ſome Men decry it, and with what Scorn, and Contempt others treat it; one wou'd almoſt wiſh that one from the Dead wou'd ariſe out of the Grave, to Confute the Unbelievers that are yet alive. One wou'd almoſt think it pity, that God has not given us ſuch Proofs; as ſhou'd leave no Poſſible room for Infidelity: That

we

we might all of us adhere closely to God; that there be no such Thing as Atheists and, Infidels, or Irreligious Men upon Earth.

But these However Honest, and well-meaning Thoughts, are very Unwise and Vain. For if we consider our present State; as a State of Tryal and Probation for the World to come: We may plainly see, that God has dealt very Graciously with us: He has given us such Evidence, that his Wisdom is concerned not to give us greater. He has given us enough to make our Belief Reasonable, but wou'd destroy our Praise and Commendation, if it forc'd us to Believe whether we wou'd or no. He has left room for Doubting and Disbelief; for Errors and Mistakes: With the same Reason and Wisdom, that he suffers Temptations in the World, and leaves us a power to do Evil. *viz.* to make Tryal of us; that our Faith may be a Virtue, and our Actions capable of Reward.

Having briefly premised this, I proceed now,

II. To ſhew the Sufficiency, and certainty of that Evidence which we have of the Truth of all the Fundamental Principles of Religion in General. By which Fundamental Principles, I mean chiefly theſe Three; 1*ſt*. The Being of God; 2*d*. His Providence over the World; 3*d*. Laſtly, A Future State of Rewards and Puniſhments, for our Good or Evil Actions after Death. Now I cannot but think that Evidence of theſe Truths to be ſufficiently Certain, and Convincing, which is not only all that the Things themſelves are capable of; but which is infinitely Clearer and Stronger than what is to be found on the other ſide; and gives a Tolerable and Rational account of thoſe Things, that otherwiſe could not be rationally accounted for. And ſuch I think is the Proof that we have of all theſe Fundamental Doctrines. I begin,

God's Exiſtence proved from the Creation.

1. With the Being of God; which has indeed been ſo Univerſally acknowleged by all Nations upon Earth; that one wou'd almoſt think it Impertinent to go about to prove it. But ſeeing the profeſs'd Infidelity of

of ſome in this Age, and the propoſed method of this Diſcourſe, make it neceſſary: I will offer theſe following Conſiderations for the Proof of it.

I. The Creation of the World; and the Order, Beauty, and Uſefulneſs of the Things Created. This is St. *Paul's* Argument, *Rom.* 1. 20. *The Inviſible Things of God, even his Eternal Power and God-head; are clearly ſeen from the Creation of the World; being underſtood by the Things that are made.* As we need no better Proof of the kind Influence of the Sun in the Firmament, upon the Fruits of the Earth, than their viſible Production and Decay; according as the Heat of that increaſes or abates: So we Mortal Earthly Creatures, want no better Evidence of the Being of God in Heaven, than the Viſible Effects of his Power, and Wiſdom, and Goodneſs in the Structure of the Univerſe. And the force of the Conſideration lies in this; that no other good account can be given of the Exiſtence of Things in this Manner and comely Order in which they are found; but to ſuppoſe them to have been Created

ated by that All-wiſe and Almighty Being, whom we call God. Whatever elſe is pretended, is Empty and Trifling, and liable to greater Difficulties, and greater Objections than this account is. As for Example.

1. Some wou'd have it thought that the World is Eternal, and that Things always were juſt as they are now, without any Beginning at all. But I never yet met with any one Probable Reaſon to ground this ſuppoſion of the Worlds Eternity upon. The old Philoſophers offer'd at ſome Arguments in defence of this Notion; but ſuch as our Modern ones are aſham'd to plead, knowing in their Conſciences that they are of no Force. So that now, inſtead of Arguments to defend it, it's only thrown in as a Suppoſition, or Problem to be debated on; and as a Bone of Contention to be Diſputed about; while the Abettors of it only endeavour to raiſe Difficulties in the Arguments of their Adverſaries, without any Reaſons of their own.

The World not Eternal.

But on the other hand, that the World had a Beginning, and was Created; has nothing in it but what is very

very agreeable to the Notions of Mankind; and is founded upon clear and good Reaſon. We ſee a multitude of Things in Being that once were not, and conſequently had a Beginning; whatſoever had a Beginning muſt derive its Being from ſomething that was before it, and had Power to Produce it. This is founded on a clear Principle of Reaſon, which all agree in: *viz.* That nothing can poſſibly make it Self. *Nihil poteſt gigni ſine cauſis.* This is as reaſonable as it is when we ſee a Child, to conclude that he had a Father, becauſe he could not beget himſelf.

Tull. Timæus. Cap. 2.

Now this muſt of neceſſity lead us to ſome Eternal, Self-exiſting Being. Even our Adverſaries themſelves, which is particularly to be taken notice of; are forc'd to come at laſt to ſomething that is Eternal. Either the World it ſelf muſt be Eternal, or elſe the Matter of which it was made; or elſe an Eternal God, who as the Scripture tells us, made them both. Some one of theſe concluſions all Mankind muſt come to. And I cannot ſee, why this is not enough to determine the Queſtion.

For

For if there muſt be a Self-exiſting, and Eternal Being: I appeal to the common underſtandings of Man-kind, Whether it be not Infinitely more Reaſonable to believe a Self-exiſting God, than a Self-exiſting World; and an Eternal God, than an Eternal World. Conſidering too; that whatſoever is Self-exiſting and Eternal, muſt have other Glorious Perfections alſo, as Knowledge, Wiſdom, Power and Will; which it is not eaſy to appropriate to the World. Conſidering again, that there are ſeveral other Evidences beſides the Creation of the World, to prove the Being of a God; but not one good Reaſon to prove the Eternity of the World: 'Tis a meer groundleſs Fiction.

Nor made by Chance.

2. The other Evaſion is, to imagine the World to have a Beginning, and yet to be the product of Chance; to proceed only from an innumerable number of *Atoms*, Accidentally jumbling into this Excellent Order, and Uſeful Frame; which is more monſtrouſly Ridiculous than the former. For the very nature of Chance is, that it excludes all Deſign.

And

And to imagine ſuch a vaſt number of Things as make the World; ſo Exact in Order; ſo Excellent in their Frame; of ſo Illuſtrious Beauty, and Advantageous Uſe, without being Deſign'd: Is ſo ſtrangely Abſurd; that one may with greater Reaſon and Probability ſuppoſe the fineſt Pictures in the World to be Drawn by Chance; without any Skill or Labour of the Painter. For if all the Uſefull, and Uniform Works of Men, are thus evidently the effects of Art, and Labour, and Deſign, and Skill; with how much greater Reaſon, muſt we conclude the ſame of that vaſt number of the Uſeful and Uniform Works of Nature? The Excellent Order, the Admirable Uſe of every the leaſt part, in ſo vaſt a Number, ſo great a Variety of Things: Is as ſure an Evidence of Power, Wiſdom, Deſign and Skill, in the Diſpoſition of them: As the Light of the Day is an Evidence that there is a Sun; or the moſt Wonderful Motions in a Clock, of Art in him that made it.

View a little what the Frame of the Univerſe is, and ſee if the Production

duction be ſo Mean and Inconſiderable, that it requires neither Wiſdom, nor Power in the Diſpoſition of it. And if you want a method for your Contemplations, take it from God's Expoſtulation with *Job*, and ask *whether the Foundations of the Earth were laid* by Chance, *and the Chief Corner Stone* by Accident? Reflect how theſe things; which ſome would have imputed to Chance, exceed all the moſt Refined Reaſon, and Improv'd Philoſophy of Mankind to explain their Natures, and account accurately for their Operations. *Haſt thou entred into the Treaſures of the Snow? Or haſt thou ſeen the Treaſures of the Hail? By what way is the Light parted which ſcatereth the Eaſt Wind upon the Earth? and who hath divided a Watercourſe for the overflowing of Waters? Or a way for the Lightning of Thunder; to cauſe it to Rain upon the Earth, where no Man is, and on the Wilderneſs where there is no body? Out of whoſe Womb came the Ice? and who hath begotten the hoary froſt of Heaven? When the Waters are hidden as with a Stone, and the Face of the deep is hard frozen?*

Job 38. 4. 6. 22. 24. 25. 26. 29. 30.

31. *frozen? Canſt thou bind the ſweet in-*
fluence of Pleiades, or looſe the bands
32. *of Orion? Canſt thou bring forth Maz-*
zaroth in his ſeaſon, or canſt thou guide
33. *Arcturus with his Sons? Knoweſt thou*
the Ordinances of Heaven? Canſt thou
ſet the Dominion thereof in the Earth?
Canſt thou ſend forth Lightnings?
34. *Canſt thou lift up thy voice to the*
Clouds, that abundance of Waters
36. *may cover thee? Above all, who hath*
put Wiſdom in the inner part of Man?
or who hath given Underſtanding in his
37. *Heart? Who can number the Clouds in*
Wiſdom? or who can ſtay the bottles of
38. *Heaven, When the Duſt groweth in-*
to hardneſs, and the Clods cleave faſt
together?

Indeed, tho' every ſingle part of the Univerſe carries this Evidence of Divinity in its Production: yet above all, this is to be concluded from the excellent Faculties, and Endowments of Mankind, who have in them Reaſon, and Wiſdom, and an Underſtanding Soul. For are we all the works of Chance, and do's Man Live, and Move, and Think, and Talk by Accident? This is ſure too Palpable and Groſs a Conceit to be coun-

countenanc'd; and leaves us neceſſarily to believe, that theſe are the Certain Effects of Wiſdom, and Power; of Wiſdom Infinite, and Power Almighty.

This Conſideration is ſtill capable of Improvement; by reflecting how plainly all things appear to have been made for the peculiar Benefit, and Support of Mankind. Of wretched Man whom all theſe Bleſſings cannot Reconcile, nor teach Gratitude and Obedience. And yet, what Continual, and Unſpeakable Advantages do we reap from theſe things? And what valuable Comforts ſhould we be deprived of in the loſs of them? How Miſerable were the Life of Man: without the Light of the Sun: and how Diſmal the Darkneſs of the Night without the Beauty of the Stars? How great is our Benefit from the very fading Plants of the Earth? Some for our food in Health: and others for Remedies in Sickneſs. How barren is the Earth without Rain, and how are the Fruits of it Deſtroyed when there falls too much? All things are ordained to be Beneficial to us, and are given us as

ſo many ſure Teſtimonies not only of the Wiſdom, and the Power, but alſo of the Love, and the Goodneſs of our God.

If theſe thoughts alone will not be ſufficient, I add

God's Exiſtence, from Miracles.

2. A farther Evidence of an Infinite and Almighty Power appears from what Mankind calls Miracles, and Wonders, *(i. e.)* from an Interruption of the Laws of Nature, and from the Extraordinary Changes, and Aſtoniſhing Alterations that have happened in the Order, and Powers of ſublunary things. Tho' in Truth, the firſt Eſtabliſhment of that Frame, and Order, ſeems much the Greater Wonder of the two. And yet, we plainly ſee the handy-work of Almighty God in all thoſe Rare Events, and ſtrange Surpriſing Changes. When the *Windows of Heaven are opened*, and the *Fountains of the Deep broken up*; and a Deluge covers the face of the whole Earth; and the whole Race of Men, and Beaſts are cut off by a mighty Flood; except a ſmall Remnant preſerved in an Ark built by Miraculous Appointment for their Eſcape. When

Gen. 7. 11.

Fire

Fire and Brimſtone ſhall be rained down from Heaven on a wicked People to Deſtroy them. When *the firſt-born of Man and Beaſt* in a Large Country ſhall in one night be ſtruck with Death: and yet the People that were Tyranniz'd over, and Perſecuted by them ſhall as wonderfully eſcape that Deſtruction; When *the Sun ſhall ſtand ſtill, and ſtop* his Courſe in the Firmament, at the command of a Prophet that ſpeaks in God's Name: theſe are Certainly Diſtinguiſhing, and Undeniable characters of a Divine Power, and atteſt the truth of this Doctrine almoſt with Demonſtration. And what leſs Power do we ſuppoſe could throw down the Walls of a City, only by the ſound of a Trumpet; *Stop the Mouths of Lions, Quench the Violence of Fire*; and by the Pooreſt, and to appearance Contemptible Means: defeat the greateſt Powers, and produce the moſt wonderful Operations.

Exod. 12. 12.

Joſ. 10. 12.

Heb. 11.

Nor let it be objected againſt the force of theſe Conſiderations, that theſe Inſtances mentioned are taken from the Holy Bible, whoſe Divine

Authority the Atheiſts will not admit. For without entring into that Diſpute: if they will but allow the Bible as much Credit as is commonly given to *Thucydides*, or *Cæſar*'s Commentaries, the Argument will have force. And I therefore made choice of theſe Inſtances, becauſe I know no other Hiſtory in the World, the Truth, and Certainty of which ſtand upon ſo Good a Foundation; conſider'd ſimply as a Hiſtory, and without pleading its Divine Authority. And we muſt ever Deſpair to know any thing Certainly of former times: if the certainty of theſe things be excepted againſt.

I cannot therefore but perſiſt in Alleging ſuch inſtances as theſe, and obſerve again; that *to give ſight to Men that have been born Blind*, to *make the Deaf to hear*, *the Dumb to ſpeak*, *the Lame to walk*; *and even Dead bodies to ariſe from* the Grave: are Certain Evidences of an Almighty Being? Let the Wiſe Men, and Philoſophers of the World, bring forth their ſtrong Reaſons, and ſhew us how theſe things may be done by the Laws and Powers that are Natu-

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ral. If they cannot; we must look upon all these, as the immediate Effects, and Operations of that God who made them; and who wrought all these Amazing Wonders: to give us the Clearer Evidence of his Authority, and to make his Power the more Conspicuously to be known.

In truth all these things are legible Characters, and Certain Testimonies of God's Providence, as well as Power. Being all, or most of them, done to Punish the Wickedness, and Sins of some Men; and to Protect the Innocence of others. To discover how he hates the Naughtiness of the Wicked; and Loves, and Favours the Holy and Righteous: that thereby the Sons of Men may learn to Fear, and to Obey him.

How strange is it then, that any should yet pretend to Doubt, whether there be a God or no! Has not Man seen the Order, and Frame of things interrupted, the Powers of Nature sometime stopped, and suspended; and sometimes Increased and Multiplied? Heaven and Earth conspiring to execute Vengeance upon the Dissolute, and Profane? To swal-

low them up in Earthquakes; drown them with Deluges; and burn them with Fire? Have we not on the other hand, found the like Wonders done for the Preſervation of Good Men? Have they not met with that Gentleneſs, and Clemency from Lions, and Beaſts of Prey: that has reproach'd the Cruelty, and Barbarity of Man? And are all theſe Stupendous Wonders the works of Undeſigning Chance, and mere Accident? How comes Chance thus exactly to Diſtinguiſh; and thus Artificially to Counterfeit deſign? Monſtrous abſurdity, and baſe Impiety of Mankind! in all theſe Amazing, and ſurpriſing Operations: not to acknowledge the Power, and Goodneſs of a Gracious God.

From Prophecy.

3. Another Argument is from the Spirit of Prophecy: and the knowledge of Future Events; of things that are Contingent: and that depend upon the Free Will and Choice of Man. A Gift ſo Extraordinary, that ſome who believe a God are almoſt ready to doubt whether Omniſcience it ſelf can reach it. And yet we have read ſtrange things of this

this nature, and very well atteſted. *Jeroboam* was told that the *Prieſts of Baal ſhould be burnt upon the Altar, that he had made in Bethel*; and *Joſia*, the Author of this, was particularly named: when he was not born till 300 Years after this Prediction. 1 King. 13.2.

Iſaiah foretold that *Iſrael* ſhould be carried into *Aſſyria*; and *Judah* into *Babylon*; and that afterwards both *Aſſyria*, and *Babylon* themſelves ſhould be deſtroyed, and the *Jews* reſtored; and he called *Cyrus* King of *Perſia*, the Deliverer of the *Jews*, by his Name: before they were gone into Captivity, and full 200 Years before the Man was born. Iſa. 39. Iſa. 43. 14. Iſa. 45.

Again, it was foretold to the *Jews* many Ages before Chriſt's Incarnation, *that the Scepter ſhould not depart from Judah, nor a Lawgiver from between his feet till Shiloh came.* And how particularly did the Prophets deſcribe the manner of Chriſt's Birth, the Condition of his Life, and the Circumſtances of his Death? That he ſhould be born in *Bethlehem*, live at *Nazareth*, retire into *Egypt*; that *he ſhould be a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief?* That he ſhould Gen. 49. 10. Iſa. 53. 3. 7.

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be led *as a Lamb to the Slaughter*; and that at his death they *ſhould part his Garments*, and *caſt Lots for his Coat?* How came all theſe Actions; All theſe Circumſtances, to be thus particularly known, and declar'd, ſo very long, ſo many Ages before they were fulfilled: if there be no God to Communicate to Man this Knowledge?

Pſal. 22. 18.

If this lies within the Sphere, and Compaſs of Man's own natural Underſtanding, or Acquired Abilites: why do not we ſee ſome Effects of it now? How comes ſo precious a Talent to be ſo entirely loſt? What has been done by the Powers of Nature, may be done again. But if theſe Predictions exceed all Humane Art, and Skill; this is an Evidence as clear as Demonſtration: that Prophecy is the gift of an Omniſcient God; of one who has all Actions, and Events; both Paſt and Future: laid naked, and open, and preſent before him!

This is ſo plain an Inſtance of Omniſcience, and Divinity; that God himſelf challenges the Idolatrous Heathen to ſhew ſuch Wiſdom

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in their Idols; and urges their incapacity to do it as an Evidence of their Vanity; *Produce your cauſe ſaith the Lord: Let them bring their Gods forth, and ſhew us what ſhall happen. Let them ſhew the former things, what they be, that we may conſider them, and know the latter end of them, or declare unto us things for to come. Shew the things that are to come Hereafter, that we may know that ye are Gods.* For the Spirit of Prophecy is a plain Argument of a Divine, and Almighty Power. Iſa. 41. 21.

4. Another Proof is from the Power of Conſcience, from the Comfort and Joy which Men always find, in looking upon their Good Actions: and the great Shame, and Confuſion that attend the Wicked, in reflecting upon their Crimes, and Miſcarriages. For how comes a Wicked Man to Fear: when a Good Man Rejoyces? Nay how comes a Religious Man to have Joy, and Comfort even in Sufferings, and Afflictions: and the wicked Man's Heart to be full of Sorrows amidſt all his Plenty, and all his Pleaſures? Whence proceeds this Difference? What is the Good Man's

From the powers of Conſcience.

Man's Comfort? And of what is the Wicked Man afraid? It all proceeds from a deep Senſe, and Perſuaſion of both their Minds; that *there is a Reward for the Righteous*; *that there is a God that Judgeth the Earth*; that *innocence will bring a Man peace at the laſt*: when Wickedneſs ſhall be attended with Miſery, and Ruine.

Pſal. 58. 11.

37. 37.

I know the Atheiſt tells us, that theſe are only the effects of Prejudice, and Education, and Notions early and long imbibed. But this is ſo Old, and Stale an Objection, that methinks if there had been any Truth in it, its Antiquity; its having been Often urg'd, and Much made on: ſhould have been able to have overcome the Prejudice long ago. But which is much more; How come theſe very Men, who Plead this, and who ſay this is only Prejudice, to be yet under the ſame Fears and Terrors with other Men? For whatever they may pretend while they bask in ſenſual Pleaſures, when they are drown'd in Wine, and Suborn'd by their Luſts: yet Calamities, and Judgments do very often Awaken their Conſciences, and reſtore their Fears.

And

And how comes he, who Believed no God all his Life: to be Afraid of one at his Death? Let *Caligula* ſpeak from under the Bed, where he hid himſelf when it Thundered: what it was that made him afraid. Whether his Fear was the effect of Prejudice? How came he, who had ſo Often, and ſo Notoriouſly, both by his Blaſphemous Language, and his Viler Actions, Affronted God, and bid open Defiance to all Divine Power: how came he at laſt, to be afraid of Thunder, and to tremble at the Smoak of *Ætna?* What, could not ſo Great a Maſter, ſo Renown'd a Proficient in Atheiſm, and Debauchery, overcome theſe Trivial, and Fooliſh Fears, as the Atheiſt generally accounts them? 'Tis a plain Argument that they are not ſo Trivial, and Fooliſh as pretended: but Natural, and Reaſonable, and Juſt; proceeding from the Strong Convictions of our Minds, that there is a God, and that Judgments will overtake the Wicked.

Sueton in Calig. Sect. 51.

5. And Laſtly, Another Argument is, from the Univerſal Conſent of Mankind in this Belief. This the Atheiſt

From the conſent of Men.

Atheiſt would not allow to be of ſufficient force: becauſe all Nations have not worſhipped the ſame Deity; but bowed down to various Idols. But in anſwer to this, give me leave to uſe the words of a Great Divine of our own. "'Tis a ſure "ſign, that he has ſome Father, who "is ready to call every Man he meets "his Father. The Evidences we have mentioned were to all the Heathens a ſufficient Conviction, that there muſt be ſome Divine Power. But not being able to find out Who, or What this God was: their Ignorance in this; led them to worſhip Many Gods, *(i. e.)* almoſt every Creature in which the Effects of a Divine Power were to be found. Which certainly they had never done, but from the Strong Convictions of their Minds, that there muſt be a God, tho' they could not tell where to find him.

Biſhop *Stillingfleet.*

Hence it comes to paſs that all Ages, and Nations, Antient, and Modern; *Scythians*, and *Indians*; both in the *Eaſt*, and *Weſt*; however Diſtant in Place, and Different in Climate; however ſtrangely Various in the

the Objects of their Worſhip: yet they almoſt all with one conſent Acknowledge ſome Divine, and Almighty Power. Profane Men tell us this is only the Contrivance of Politicians; as *Minos* pretended to have his Laws from *Jupiter*, and *Numa* from *Egeria*; to gain Authority to them, and to keep the World in awe: and by theſe fears to Reſtrain Men from falling into miſchievous Diſorders and Confuſion. I am glad to here ſo fair a Confeſſion that Religion is Advantageous, and Beneficial to Mankind. But are they ſure that there was no knowledge of God in the World, till *Minos*, or *Numa Pompilius* ſet theſe Opinions on foot? How then could it be ſerviceable to give Authority to their Laws, to pretend they received them from the Gods: unleſs the Belief of a God, had firſt gain'd Credit, and firmly poſſeſs'd Mens Minds before?

To ſay that this is only a Contrivance of Prieſts, or Stateſmen, is a poor Argument, and pitiful Suggeſtion. It is to overthrow the Conſent of all Mankind, and the clear Evidence of all theſe Good Reaſons:

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by a mere Conjecture, and a very Improbable Suggeſtion of a Few Men, and thoſe none of the Beſt neither. Againſt all theſe Arguments one would expect ſome ſerious Proofs, and ſuch as ſhould carry at leaſt, ſome Probability, and Likelyhood of Truth in their Face. Who then ſet this Politic Contrivance on foot? Whence did it ariſe? And by what means was it carried on? Till they can anſwer all theſe Queſtions in ſome tolerable Manner: this Aſſertion is ſo Precarious; that it muſt be looked on, as a Contemptible, and Frivolous Objection. Till they can anſwer all theſe Queſtions in ſome tolerable manner, the Univerſal Conſent of Mankind in the belief of a God, muſt be thought to proceed from the Principles of Nature; the Dictates of Right, and Sound Reaſon; and the Eternal Law of our Minds, and Conſciences.

Theſe are the Evidences, and Reaſons of our Belief of this firſt Fundamental Principle; They are not all that might be gathered; nor ſet off with all the Advantages and Ornaments that ſuch a Cauſe would bear. But rather, purſuant to my General

deſign,

deſign, a few Plain Reflections for thoſe to exerciſe their Meditations upon: that are ſincerely deſirous of Information, and Satisfaction. Which I thought ſufficient in this Caſe, in that the Being of God is ſeriouſly denied by very few; and thoſe, almoſt univerſally, ſuch as appear rather to Fear, than to Disbelieve this important Truth. I proceed therefore to the

II. Second Fundamental Principle of Religion, *viz.* God's Providence over the World. And this is as neceſſary as the former. For if God did not Intereſt himſelf in the Affairs of Mankind, nor Regard how we Live or what we Do: it were all one to us as if there was none at all; and we ſhould be as little Concerned in the Matter. For then there would be little to be Expected, and little to be Feared from him. But if there be a God, and ſuch a one as looks down to Behold, and Regard the things that are done upon the Earth: then we have Cauſe to Dread, and to Worſhip, and to ſerve him. For then there will certainly be a Judg-

God's Providence manifeſted.

ment to come, and a Recompence to the Actions of Men; either Good or Evil as they require.

Now to make out the Truth of this Doctrine I have pretty well prepar'd my way already. In that moſt of thoſe Conſiderations inſiſted on above: are as good Proofs of his Providence as of his Being. And from the Belief of a God, to the Belief of his Government of the World, is a Rational Concluſion; in that it naturally ariſes from the Attributes, and Perfections of the Divine Nature.

From the Order of the Creation.

I. The Conſiderations inſiſted on above are as good Proofs of his Providence as of his Being. The very Order of the Creation, and the wiſe Frame and Diſpoſition of all things upon Earth; plainly ſhew not only his Power in the Production, but his General Proviſion and Care, for all his Creatures. And the Wonderful Changes he has made, and the Miracles he has wrought; as they have chiefly faln under the Obſervation, and Cognizance of Men, and chiefly affected them: they are Evidences of his peculiar Concernment for

for Mankind. And when we reflect, that many of those Stupendous Operations were particularly intended in Vengeance to Great and Insulting Sinners; or in favour to, and for the Protection, and Defence of the Virtuous, and Innocent: in them he shews that he has regard not only to our Persons, but also to our Virtues and Vices, and to the Good, and Evil of our Actions. And as the Predictions of the Prophets gave Light unto the Law; and confirmed its Authority; were good Preparatives to the Gospel, and stand at this Day as so many Testimonies of its Truth: in these we see how much God concerns himself for the Instruction of our Minds, as well as for the Support of our Bodies; and gives singular Tokens of his Solicitude and Care for the Good of our Souls. All these are so many Instances of the Divine Love, and Affection, and Tenderness; of his great Regard to, and Watchful Providence over us for our Good.

But the most Convincing Testimony is, from the Powers of Conscience; from those Delights, and

Comforts that attend Men in doing Good; and the Fears, and Jealouſies, and Horrible Apprehenſions that haunt and perlex them upon doing Evil. Theſe, do not only atteſt the Being of a God from whom they muſt be derived, as they are Natural, and Indelible: but they give the ſame Teſtimony to his Providence and Government; in the very Ends they ſerve, and the Purpoſes to which they are apparently directed. For why ſhould the Author of our Being Graft into our Natures ſuch Principles of Complacency, and Joy in what is Good: if he had no Delight therein; or there was nothing to be Hoped for thereby? Or why ſhould he teach Men to Grieve, and Tremble, and be Afraid upon the Commiſſion of Enormous Crimes; if he had no regard thereto? So that the very Ends to which the Powers of Conſcience ſerve, plainly ſpeak a deſign in him to Reward the Virtues, and to Puniſh the Vices of Men. And Rewards, or Puniſhments are the very End of Government or Providence, and muſt neceſſarily ſuppoſe it. But

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2. The Belief of this naturally ariſes from the Attributes, and Perfections of the Divine Nature. Wiſdom, Goodneſs, Juſtice, and Holineſs are his eſſential Perfections which we can never believe him to be without: but we offer Violence to all the Natural Apprehenſions of Mankind concerning him. And ſo Indelible and Inſeparable are theſe Apprehenſions; that Men chooſe rather to diſpute whether there be a God, or no: then admitting that to deny his Wiſdom, Goodneſs, Juſtice, and Holineſs. And yet if we conſider but a very little, we may eaſily diſcern how Trifling and Uſeleſs all theſe Glorious Perfections are made without a Providence. For Example. *From the Perfections of the Divine Nature.*

Where is the Wiſdom of God if he leaves the World neglected without any Rule, or Government? Wiſdom, properly and truly, conſiſts in propoſing Worthy, and Noble Ends of every Action; and in proſecuting thoſe Ends by Fit and Proper Means. Let then any of the Acuteſt Diſputants againſt Religion aſſign any Juſt Cauſe of creating the World, or any Wiſe, and Worthy End to

which its Creation could be Serviceable: without a Divine Rule, and Government over it. Was God's Glory the Motive of making all these things; and did he do it for the Exercise of his Divine Perfections? That his Power might be known; and that in his Wisdom he might be admired? Be it so, but then we cannot but be sensible, that if there was Wisdom in the Contrivance, and Power in the Production of these things; in the Government of them there is a Lasting, and Continued Exercise of those Attributes. So that if it was a Wise thing to create the World for the Manifestation of these: it is still Wiser to Govern it by his Providence; in that in Ordering, and Over-ruling all things, Wisdom, and Power are as conspicuously display'd as they were in the Original Creation of them.

Or was the Good, and Happiness of Men any part of his End and Purpose in their Being? This cannot be without a Providence. For how will the Wisdom of God be vindicated, Originally to intend Men for Happiness; and yet, when they are born

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into a World full of Misery, to leave them there Unregarded?

Again, is there any such Justice in God, as concerns it self in Rewards, and Punishments? Any such Goodness as supplies the Necessities of the Miserable? Any such Holiness as appears in the Love of Good Men and the Detestation of the Wicked? How can these things be without a Providence? Can there be either Wisdom, or Rewards, or Protection where there is no Care? Or can there be either Love, or Hatred, or Punishment where there is an Universal Neglect, and Disregard? And yet there can be nothing else but an Universal Neglect, and Careless Disregard: where there is no Providence. So that in a Word, to dispute the Providence of God is such a Blemish to all his Divine Perfections; that I dare be Confident, every one who would have the most Plausible Excuse for his Iniquities will never fix his Scruples here; but rather retire into his Last Quarters, and dispute the Existence of God: than allowing that; to assert any thing of him that so much contradicts all the Natural No-

tions and Apprehenſions by which he has been known to Men. Wiſdom and Goodneſs, and Power, and Juſtice, and Mercy, and Holineſs are ever with him, and in the Adminiſtration of his Government is the Glory of thoſe Perfections to be ſeen; and He to be ador'd in them.

He is Wiſe, in over-ruling all Affairs, and ordering all Events; and in making all things Subſervient to his Honour, and to the Good of all his Servants. He is Powerful, to protect the Innocent, and to deſtroy the Wicked. He is Juſt, to Reward the Righteous, and to take Vengeance on the Sinner. And in the Exerciſe of that Juſtice with a reaſonable allay of Mercy, both toward Good and Bad Men: he vindicates the Holineſs of his Nature, his Love to Virtue, and his Abhorrence of Iniquity.

The greateſt difficulty in this Point has been, in that we do not find all things at preſent Ordered, and Diſpoſed exactly according to this Rule. There are a great many Wicked Men in the World, and yet they Flouriſh, and Proſper; and there are a great many

many Religious, and Good People, and they are often Afflicted, and Oppreſſed. I grant there is all this; and yet it is not reaſonable from hence to conclude that there is no Providence: becauſe God has very Wiſe, and Gracious Ends to ſerve by this Various, and Promiſcuous Adminiſtration. In ſhort; he do's all this, in part to keep us from too great an Opinion of the things of this tranſitory Life: but more eſpecially; to convince us that theſe are not the only Bleſſings, and Rewards which he has deſign'd for us. The proper Inference therefore to be drawn from hence, is not immediately to deny a Providence: but rather the more firmly to expect another State after Death: when the Wiſe God will rectify all theſe things, and both Reward, and Puniſh Mankind exactly according to their Deſerts. This indeed ſeems the great Purpoſe that God intended by it. And therefore it will be a great Confirmation of the Certainty of a Divine Providence: to ſhew the Certainty of a Future State; which is the next thing to be conſidered. But before I proceed to this,

I would offer one or two Obſervations by the way.

The Folly of Scoffing at Religion.

1. From what has been already obſerved it muſt needs appear inexcuſably Wicked, and Fooliſh; for Men Profanely, and Blaſphemouſly to ſcoff at Religion, and make Sport and Raillery of its Principles, and Pretences. If there be a God, there can I think be no Diſpute, but that there ſhould be Religion, and that he ought to be Worſhipped. And ſo, if this firſt Doctrine has but any Tolerable Probability, and Appearance of Truth: it is a thing of that Mighty Importance, and Conſequence to Mankind to be Rightly informed, and to Judge Impartially about it; that it ought to be Fairly treated, and Seriouſly dealt with. Whatever may be the Succeſs of it; yet I ſay the Arguments are not ſo Trifling, and Frivolous; nor thoſe who profeſs it altogether ſo Contemptible: but that for fear of the worſt, and out of a Reſpect to Men, and more eſpecially in an awfull Reverence to the Tremendous Name of God, who thro' ſo many Ages has been Eſteemed the Author of it; it may reaſonably

ably look for Fair Quarter, and Modeſt Language; and to be heard at leaſt with Candor, and Humanity.

To every Man who do's in good Earneſt believe the Truth of Religion, it muſt be Dreadfull to have that God his Enemy, and to live under the terrible Apprehenſions of his Vengeance, and fiery Indignation. For as his Goodneſs is great, ſo his Judgments are ſevere; He is mighty to ſave, and mighty to deſtroy; and his Wrath is as a Conſuming Fire. In a Debate then of this Mighty, and Everlaſting Importance; it is Folly, and Madneſs, and Unreaſonable Wickedneſs beyond all Excuſe, not to be Serious, and Sober, and indeed Impartial in the Conſideration of its Principles.

The Danger of Partiality, & Diſaffection.

And this is the ſecond Obſervation I would make from the Evidences that we have of its Truth. I Obſerv'd and Confeſs'd above, that they are not ſuch, as Conſtrain our Aſſent whether we will or no: but ſuch as have a Rational force of convincing all that are not blinded by their Paſſions, and Affections; nor Prejudic'd in favour of their Luſts, and Vices.

If

If this be the Nature of its Proofs; its eaſy to diſcover how Neceſſary it is, that Men ſhould lay aſide all thoſe Evil Paſſions, and overcome all Diſaffection, and Stedfaſtly reſolve to adhere to its Reaſons; let them never ſo much croſs their Inclinations. And how little, how very little is to be hoped for in the Conſideration of it; if Men do not come thus Sincere, thus Impartial, thus Prepared?

It is to the want of this, that we owe the ill Succeſs of it upon the Minds of Men. Men come to it with their Souls ſo full of Fears, and Terrors, and Strong Averſions, and Horrible Expectations from it, by reaſon of their crying Sins: that whatever Evidences it may have of Truth, they had rather, conſidering their own Conditions, that it was falſe. And by the Power of thoſe Sins their Spirits are ſo Debauch'd, and their Hearts ſo Senſualiz'd, ſo fond of Mean, Low, Sordid, and Impure Pleaſures; that their Liking, and Love to the Virtues of it, are quite as little as their Hope of its Rewards.

Theſe things are the Cauſe of all that Contempt that is ſhown to it, and to its Profeſſors; and the only Reaſon why Men betake themſelves ſo readily to Profane and Atheiſtical Principles. This *Cicero* tells us, was the great Reaſon why the *Epicurean's*, diſputed ſo eagerly againſt Divine Providence. The very thoughts of it were Diſmal, and a Terror to the Conſciences of thoſe who plac'd all their Happineſs in Senſual Delights. *Impoſuiſtis cervicibus noſtris ſempiternum Dominun quem Dies, & noctes timeremus. Quis enim non timeat omnia providentem, & cogitantem, & animadvertantem, & omnia ad ſe pertinere putantem, curioſum, & plenum negotii Deum.* 'Tis a Terrible thing to believe a God, whom they cannot but be Afraid of. This is at the bottom of all this Myſtery of Atheiſm. Wicked Men can look for nothing but Vengeance, and Deſtruction. Their only Comfort and Safety is in there being no God: and therefore it is that they ſet themſelves with all the Induſtry and Reſolution; with all the Obſtinacy and Perverſneſs imaginable, to perſwade themſelves

Cicero *de N. D. L.* 1. *c.* 20.

ſelves that the Principles of Religion are falſe. They are afraid to think there is a God, and would be glad if there were none: it being the only way poſſible for thoſe who will be Wicked, not to be Miſerable.

And yet from this very Reflection, that they have no other Expectations of Safety, but in the Falſeneſs of Religion: it behoves them to conſider well on what Foundation their Hopes ſtand. To throw aſide their Prejudices, to weigh things in a Right Balance, and Judge impartially which way the Scale turns. For we ſee a Miſtake here will prove irreparable. We ſee alſo there is a great deal to be ſaid in its Defence: almoſt every thing in Nature giving Evidence to the Being of a God: and our Notions and Apprehenſions of his Attributes convincing us of his Providence, and of the Neceſſity of Rewards and Puniſhments.

And what has either the Atheiſt, or the Prófane Irreligious Man to urge in his own Defence againſt the ſtrong Teſtimony of ſo great a Cloud of Witneſſes? In truth we cannot deſire a fuller Demonſtration of the Un-

Unreaſonableneſs, and Vanity of Atheiſm: than the Atheiſts themſelves give us in their very firſt Principles. They demand ſuch Arguments as the Nature of things cannot admit: and reject that Teſtimony in Religion, which they believe in almoſt all Worldly, and Secular Affairs. Our All-wiſe God has given no more than Moral Arguments, intending by that the Exerciſe of our Faith. But our over-wiſe Atheiſts will allow no Evidence ſufficient to be credited; but what amounts to a Demonſtration, and conſequently deſtroys both the Nature of Faith, and its Commendation. They cannot comprehend God's Nature, and the Manner of his Exiſtence, and they know not how any thing can be, but what their Reaſon Comprehends. Is not this a rare way of Arguing, to urge the Weakneſs of our Underſtanding, as an Argument againſt the Being of a God: when he could not be God, if he were not Incomprehenſible?

Well, but *ſeeing is believing*; and theſe Men may be convinced by the Evidence of Senſe, and ſaved as well

as

as others. But I pray why ſhould they not be ſaved by Faith as well as other Men? And what a Monſtrous Abſurdity is it to expect the Evidence of Sight: when God is in Heaven, and we upon Earth; and one of his Eſſential Attributes is, that he is Inviſible. At this rate, Almighty God muſt diveſt himſelf of his Attributes, lay aſide his Divinity, and the Immutable become quite another thing than what he is: before theſe Men can be convinced that there is a God at all. Such as theſe are the Ridicul ous Expectations of theſe over-cautious Men. So ſtrangely do all theſe Mighty Pretenders to Reaſon, and Wiſdom; to Science, and Philoſophy; betray their Weakneſs, and advance Notions that ſavour of nothing but Abſurdities and Folly. For what can be more Monſtrouſly abſurd and fooliſh: then to expect ſuch Proofs of the Truth of Religion, as deſtroy the very Nature of it?

Is there then no Hope to the Impenitent Sinner but in the Falſeneſs of Religion? Oh! how does it concern him to break off from his Sins, and

and to ſerve God with a Pure and an Upright Heart; when he has ſuch Convincing Proofs of its Truth; and only ſuch Poor, Frivolous, and Contemtible Objections brought againſt it.

But I'le not enlarge farther on this, till I have examined what Good Aſſurance we have of that Third and laſt thing, which is yet behind.

CHAP. II.

The certainty of a Future State of Rewards and Puniſhments.

THE next Fundamental Principle in Religion, after the Being of God, and his Providence over the World: is that of a Future State of Rewards and Puniſhments after Death. And the firm belief of that, is of equal neceſſity with either of the former. For as we ſee Affairs ordered on Earth, and the Conſtruction that Men make of them; neither God nor his Providence wou'd be much regarded, if there was nothing to be expected

from them, but what happens in this Preſent Life. It is the apprehenſion and Dread of an After-reck'ning and a Future Account that preſſes Men the cloſeſt; And theſe are the Fears that they are moſt deſirous to be rid of, and moſt ſolicitous to object againſt. And yet, here we have repeated Evidences, and ſtrong Proofs, both from Reaſon and Revelation. The Voice of Nature cries aloud and is earneſt to be heard, in the dictates of our natural *Conſciences* about Good and Evil; and the Juſtice of the Divine Providence; and the vindication of his Holineſs all plead the Neceſſity of it: and the Revelations of the Goſpel do as expreſly declare that ſuch a State ſhall be.

But to ſet all theſe things in the clearer Light, I wou'd premiſe one or two ſhort Remarks; as,

The difference between Good and Evil evident by the light of Nature.

I. We muſt conſider that there is a Real, and Eſſential, and Eternal difference between Good and Evil. This indeed is obvious enough to our Obſervations in the different Actions of Men. Some of them are apparently Amiable and Lovely, and Commendable in the Judgment of

of all Ages and Nations: and others are as Vilely Hateful and Deteſtable. He that is devout towards God; faithful to his Truſt; juſt in his Commerce; ſober in his Converſation; and compaſſionate to the Miſerable: does that which all Men Approve and Admire; which they will Praiſe and Reſpect him for. On the other hand, he that is Falſe and Perfidious, Unjuſt and Cruel, that breaks his Faith, and betrays his Truſt, and delights to ſhed Innocent Blood: This Man is looked on as a Monſter among his kind, his Actions are Abominable, and his Converſation Hateful.

Theſe are ſuch Notions as all Mankind, almoſt every where, are Acted and Influenced by in the Laws and Rules they agree to among themſelves. The Laws and Conſtitutions of almoſt every Country Favour and Perſwade Virtue; and ſtrictly forbid Vice and Naughtineſs. Or if there have been found any Nations that have tolerated any manifeſt Crimes; they have in all Hiſtories had a Mark of Infamy upon them; and it is conſtantly looked on as a demonſtration

of wild Barbarity; and it does in truth proceed from nothing else than a great Corruption of the Principles of Reason and Humanity; through the power of unruly Passions and ungovern'd Lusts.

The expectation of Blessings and Punishments Natural.

II. It must be observed also that expectation of Blessings, or Curses is as Natural and Reasonable as the apprehensions of Good and Evil. The same Reason that teaches that such an Action is Virtuous, teaches also that a Recompence is due to it. And the same apprehensions that instruct us that such an Action is Wicked; teach us not only that it Deserves, but that it Calls for Vengeance from a Righteous God. This is the very foundation, not of Humane Laws only, but of all the Religion, that is, or ever was among all the Nations upon Earth. They looked upon God as one that will take Cognizance of the Actions of Men; Bless the Good, and punish the Wicked.

Take away this and all Religion falls to the Ground: Take away God's Government of the World in this particular, and then we may say with

with *Tully* to the *Epicurean*, *Quæ ſanctitas? quæ Pietas?* what need of Religion or Piety? What needs any Man to value what he does, if there be neither Good nor Evil in his Actions? Or neither Recompence for the Good, nor Puniſhment for the Evil?

Theſe are I ſay, the Notions and Apprehenſions of our Being, that are Born and Bred with us; that we are Taught without Books and Maſters; that we may find out by the exerciſe of our own Faculties; and that are deeply Impreſſed, and cannot eaſily be Defaced. All have worſhipped ſome God or other; and the Motive to that Worſhip is, their Natural and Unconquerable Convictions, that Bleſſings attend good Men, and Miſery the wicked.

From this as I have ſaid before, proceeds all the Power of Conſcience, and all Mens fears of Divine Vengeance; all that inward Compunction or Remorſe which lies cloſe in our Breaſt, when none behold it; and galls us ſore when none obſerve. That which Afflicts and Torments us for the Evil we have done in Secret Corners, and under the Dark Co-

vert of the Night. That Teazes, and Haunts, and Purſues us from place to place; that makes us dread to be Alone; that will never be brib'd by Intereſt, nor aw'd by Greatneſs, nor diverted with Pleaſures; nor put off with Buſineſs. That which Sours our Delights, diſquiets our Sleep, breaks our Reſt, and diſturbs our Peace. That Self-condemnation which we can neither Stifle nor Suppreſs: is nothing elſe than a Strong, a natural Conviction, that God will Puniſh us for our Sins.

Now from theſe two Conſiderations, ariſes a Double Evidence of a Future State. For *1ſt.* this ſhews the Expectation of it to be Reaſonable, *2ly.* That it is Neceſſary.

The Belief of a Future State Reaſonable.

I. This ſhews the Expectation of ſuch a State to be Reaſonable. For from whence proceed all theſe Fears which ſo conſtantly Vex the Wicked? Where are thoſe Torments to be inflicted, that he ſo Trembles to Reflect upon? It is not always in this Life, for though there may be ſome Sinners miſerable, yet there are others who Flouriſh and Proſper, and live at Eaſe. And yet moſt of them are

are Afraid, and at one time or other, Miſerably Tormented with theſe Fears. They are Conſcious that wicked Men muſt be Miſerable, and yet they do not find the difference Now; which is a plain Demonſtration that they look for it Hereafter. So that their Belief and Apprehenſion that there will be a Future State: are indeed as Natural and Indeleble, as their ſenſe of Guilt, and the Convictions of their Conſciences. For as they do not always find Men Happy or Miſerable in this Life according to their Works: ſo it is plain that if they did not Believe and Expect it in another, they could have no Fears; there wou'd be nothing for them to be afraid of.

Eſpecially too, when thoſe Wicked Men who Flatter themſelves, and Seduce others, by pretending that theſe Fears are only owing to their Amazed Fancies, and Prejudice, and Education; when I ſay theſe very Men, who would make Conſcience to be nothing; are yet often found under the Terrors and Convictions of it, maugre all their Endeavours to the contrary: as this ſhews their

Fears to be without contradiction Natural; ſo it ſhews their Belief of another Life to be ſo too.

The like may be ſaid on the other hand for the Hopes of good Men. All Nations have a natural expectation that Good Men ſhall be Bleſſed. From hence proceeds all that Peace, and Comfort, in the Enjoyment of which, they ſaid that Virtue was it's own reward. They could not but affirm that Virtue would make Men Happy; and yet God knows, Good Men frequently meet with Croſſes, and Troubles, and Afflictions here, as well as the wicked. Notwithſtanding all this, they did not caſt away their Hopes, which plainly ſhews, that they both Believed, Expected, and Deſired another World.

And from theſe very Apprehenſions, have all the wiſeſt Heathens fetch't moſt Excellent Conſolations againſt the fear of Death; and the moſt Strong and Clear Arguments that they ever uſed, for the Immortality of the Soul. Indeed conſidering how Incapable they were of giving any Tolerable account, what the Condi-

tion

tion of Men beyond the Grave ſhall be; *where* or *how* they ſhall be Happy or Miſerable; it is utterly Impoſſible that the Immortality of the Soul ſhould have maintained it's Ground, and gained ſo Univerſal an aſſent; but that the Expectation of Future Rewards, and Puniſhments was Strong and Impregnable. They thought it Natural to expect Happineſs for Good Men, and Torments for the Wicked; and therefore they believed their Souls Immortal. But

And neceſſary to vindicate Gods Providence.

II. As this ſhews the belief of ſuch a State Reaſonable, ſo it proves it Neceſſary alſo; Neceſſary I mean to vindicate the Juſtice of Divine Providence. For the Juſtice of Providence muſt appear in a Perfect and Exact retribution; and if ſuch a thing muſt be, there muſt be ſome Time and Place allotted for it. Here Below we ſee it is not. Here things are ſo ordered that we are not capable of Diſcovering the Difference. Here Bleſſings and Comforts are beſtowed in common, both on Good and Bad. Here the Ordinary Diſpenſations of Divine Providence do ſo often Favour Sinners, and Afflict

flict the Juſt; that Men are ready to conclude, *that there is one event to all.* And though there may be more of Divine Vengeance in this Life than ſome Men generally think: yet Religious Men have ſo many Afflictions; and the Vicious ſo many Bleſſings; that it is plain, this Life cannot be the Time and Place of God's General and Complete retribution.

So that the matter comes to this Iſſue, that we muſt either deny the Juſtice of God's Providence, and that is to deny Providence it ſelf: Or elſe confeſs, that there will be a Time after Death to call us to an account. This the *Epicureans* themſelves allowed, and this was the thing as I obſerved above, that made them ſo unwilling to believe this Doctrine: becauſe they plainly ſaw that it drew a multitude of Fears and Terrors and Dreadful thoughts at the heels of it. Let things go how they will now, Vengeance will at laſt be ſeen; and the leſs a Man ſees or feels of it Here: the more cauſe he has to believe that it ſhall follow him to the Grave, and riſe with him from the Dead. If there be Juſtice in God's Adminiſtration,

ſtration, then it ſhall not be finally as with the Righteous ſo with the Wicked; But as they have diſtinguiſhed themſelves in their Actions; ſo will God divide them their Lots apart. And if the preſent Government of the World does not manifeſt ſuch ſtrict rules of Juſtice, you have the greater Aſſurance that He will hereafter bring you to Judgment.

This is an Argument of ſo much Force, and Clearneſs; and ſo proper to this purpoſe, that as I obſerved above; one of the Great and Chief ends why Providence orders Affairs in ſo Promiſcuous a manner: is to Raiſe our thoughts, and give us Expectations of a World to come.

If it fared with all Men here according to their Works; if Religious Men were always Happy, and the wicked only and always Miſerable; if there was this Exactneſs obſerved in Rewards and Puniſhments now: we ſhould ſit down Here and look no farther. We ſhould be apt to conclude, that the Bleſſings of *our Baskets and our Store* were all the Bleſſings that God deſign'd us; and we ſhould loſe one of the ſtrongeſt of all thoſe Arguments

guments that Reaſon has ſupplied us with of the Certainty of a World to come. As therefore God deſign'd us for Eternity; ſo this Variety in the diſpenſations of Providence here, was one of the Beſt and Wiſeſt means of keeping theſe Expectations alive in us. Had it not been for this, in probability it had been loſt. This has Awakened our Attention; put us upon Thinking and Conſideration; and the difficulty of Vindicating God's Providence in the management of things at Preſent: has kept up alive our Apprehenſions of the Future World, as God deſign'd that it ſhould. But,

And to vindicate God's Holineſs.

III. Such a State is neceſſary to vindicate the Holineſs of God. By Holineſs, I here mean the Attributes whereby he is Free from all Sin, and all Imputation of Sin; and whereby he appears utterly to Abhor, and Deteſt it. For as a Good Man, not only does no Evil himſelf but, gives no Approbation, no Countenance to the Sins of others: So this is the account that the Prophet gives of the Holineſs of God .Hab.1. 13.*That he is of Purer Eyes than to behold Evil.* And all

all along in *Leviticus*, his Holineſs is uſed as an Argument to oblige the People to keep themſelves from all Uncleanneſs; plainly intimating thereby, his Abhorrence and Deteſtation of Iniquity. In this reſpect God is certainly very Tender, and Jealous of his Honour, being Earneſt to be thought ſo ſevere an Enemy to all Impiety, as neither to Approve, nor Tolerate, nor Connive at it.

Now, there are but two ways known to Men, by which he can Vindicate the Glory of this Attribute; and they are either by the Prevention, or the Puniſhment of Sin. He does indeed a great deal in the Prevention of it. By his Laws and his Grace, and his Providence, He diſappoints many a Vile Intreague, and hinders many Enormous Sins, that the Wickedneſs of Men deſign, project and contrive. But this is by Methods ſo ſecret, that few of Mankind Believe, and fewer Obſerve them.

However he does not Prevent all, for we plainly ſee a great deal Permitted. From the Imputation of which

which he has no way to Vindicate himſelf and his Holineſs; but by the Puniſhment that he ſhall inflict.

Indeed ſome have been of Opinion, that it is not Conſiſtant with God's Attributes, ſo much as to Permit, or leave Men Power to do Evil; and have made this an Objection againſt his Providence. But when we conſider that God ſent Man into this World for Tryal, and Probation, and to make Proof of him: we ſhall find that it was Neceſſary, and conſequently more Agreeable to his Wiſdom, to leave him a Power to do Evil, than not. For unleſs Man had the Power of Choice, there could be no Tryal. There is no Tryal what any Man would do, who is already Determined Irreſiſtibly one way, whether he will or no. Seeing therefore this Life was deſign'd by the Almighty, to make Experiment, how well, or how ill Man would deſerve: it was neceſſary that he ſhould have Power to do both Good and Evil. And though by this means Sin has entred into the World; the Honour, or Wiſdom, or Sanctity of God are not in the

leaſt

leaſt blemiſh't by it; unleſs by his Impunity he ſhould ſeem to Countenance and Indulge it; I ſay unleſs by Impunity he ſhouldgive Countenance to it. For when there is no way left to Manifeſt hisGoodneſs andDeteſtation of Sin,but only by Puniſhment; then God ſeems obliged to Puniſh the Sinner, that his Holineſs, and Juſtice, and Vengeance may be known.

This I take to have been the Original Foundation ofall Divine Laws. That God has commanded us to do good,and forbidden all manner of Sin; was not wholly Arbitrary in him,as it is with Men in theirLaws aboutIndifferent things: But proceeded from the Immutable Difference between Good and Evil; and the Eternal Agreeableneſs of the one,and the Diſagreeableneſs of the other to his Attributes, and to the Happineſs of Man. Therefore was it that Iniquity was prohibited, and Death made the Puniſhment of it, and Miſery brought upon Mankind as ſoon as Sin entred into the World: That by theſe things the Purity and Holineſs of God might be made known. And if the making of ſuch Laws was in any

any wiſe neceſſary to the Manifeſtation of God's Glory in the Perfections of his Divine Nature: the execution of them in the Puniſhment of Sinners, is ſtill neceſſary to the ſame purpoſe.

And this appears alſo to have been one Great End, why he propoſes to Mankind Reconciliation by the Death and Paſſion of Chriſt. It was, that by this means he might extend Mercy, without expoſing his Holineſs, and Abhorrence of Sin to be queſtioned. He was moved with Pity, and he was unwilling that ſo Glorious a Creature as Man ſhould periſh. But what ſhall he do? He is Jealous of his Attributes alſo; to proclaim Pardon, and Mercy without any Atonement, or any Satisfaction: would have laid himſelf too open to the Cenſures of Men; and have given them too great Encouragement to Indulge themſelves in Wickedneſs; who could never be induc'd to think, that God does deteſt Sin in good earneſt; or that his Reſentments are ſevere: when they find him Reconcil'd upon too Gentle Terms. Nay indeed it would leave Men open to all

all the Temptations of the Devil, and Allurements of Sin; to have their minds poſſeſs'd with an opinion of God's too great Eaſineſs in ſhewing Mercy: Wherefore to Vindicate himſelf; to manifeſt that he cannot be Reconciled to Sin, though he can to the Sinner: He ſent his only Son to Die for us; and choſe ſuch a Method of Reconciliation, that even in the midſt of all his Mercy; we ſee his Juſtice; his Goodneſs, and his Irreconcilable Enmity to Iniquity.

And for the ſame reaſon now under the Goſpel, though our Atonement is made, yet he promiſes no Pardon, but upon a true Converſion. Still being concerned, not to give any countenance to Sin, nor any Hope to him that will continue in it.

And this is a good Evidence that he will Puniſh Men after Death. He muſt do ſo, or he can never vindicate this Attribute. He is an Holy God, and his Holineſs is concerned, not to let the wicked go unpuniſhed. But, as I muſt here obſerve again, we ſee that this happens not in this Preſent Life; Here we find Wicked Men Proſpering, and living in Pleaſures;

and good Men Labouring under ſeveral Calamities; you muſt therefore, either ſuppoſe that God has no ſuch Averſion, and Abhorrence of Sin, as both Reaſon, and Revelation declare him to have; you muſt ſuppoſe his Wrath Diſſembled, and his Severity Counterfeit; and expoſe him to all the vile Reproaches that Profane Men will throw upon his Eaſineſs; and with the bold Pagan, make his Thunder to have loſt its Bolt; and Hell to be only Smoak, and no fire: You muſt either make all his Vengeance void; his Threatnings to be no more than words; and ſet him up as a God that may ſafely be Deſpiſed, and Affronted without Danger: you muſt do all this, or elſe you muſt ſuppoſe another State after Death; in which he will call Men to account, Recompence them as they have deſerved; and Execute that Vengeance which is ſo neceſſary to vindicate his Deteſtation of Iniquity.

The New Teſtament expreſly declares a Future State,

IV. After ſuch Arguments from the Principles of Reaſon, I may hope it will be admitted in a Chriſtian Countrey, to add the Teſtimony of Di-

Divine Revelation which God has made in Scripture. This indeed is an Evidence ſo Plain: that if the Word of God had not loſt too much of its Authority, and Eſteem in the minds of Men, I had uſed no other. But we live in ſo depraved an Age, that the Holy Scriptures, the only ſure Rule of Faith, written by the Inſpiration of God; Confirm'd by Thouſands of ſtupendous Miracles; conveyed down to us by the Faithful witneſs of the Primitive Saints and Fathers; have ſo little Influence upon us, that they do not gain Aſſent, unleſs the Doctrines are firſt approved by the Teſt of our own Underſtandings. Having therefore firſt gone through that; the Revelations of Scripture may now I think ſeaſonably be brought in; and will I hope the more eaſily be heard, in that they are ſo very Plain, and Clear. Our Saviour tells us, that He is to come into the World again, and that the buſineſs of his coming ſhall be, to Judge the World, *and then ſhall he Render to every Man according to his Works.* Matt. 16. 27. And that we may the better underſtand how

this is to be done, and give the greater Credit to it: He assures us, that after Death our Bodies shall be raised from the Dust, and receive new Life by being Reunited to the Soul. *They that are in the Grave shall hear the Voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth; they that have done* Good *to the Resurrection of Life; and they that have done Evil to the Resurrection of Damnation.* John 5. 29. *If we believe that Jesus dyed and rose again: Even them also which sleep in Jesus will* God *bring with him; For the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout; with the Voice of the Archangel; and with the Trump of* God; *and the Dead in Christ shall rise first; Then they which are alive and remain; shall be caught up together with them into the Clouds, to meet the Lord in the Air.* 1. Thess. 4. 14. *In that day* God *shall Judge the Secrets of all Men by Christ Jesus,* Rom. 2.16. And we being summoned by the sound of the Trumpet, *shall stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he has done, whether it is* Good *or Bad.* 2 Cor. 5. 10. And what the business

buſineſs of that Judgment is to be, our Saviour himſelf declares, Matt. 25. 32. *And before him ſhall be gathered all Nations, and he ſhall ſeperate them one from the other, as a Shepherd divides his Sheep from the Goats; and he ſhall ſet the Sheep* that is all Good Men *on the right Hand*, the place of Favour and Honour; *and the Goats* that is the Wicked Men *on the lef* to be Condemned. And then will it Concern all Men Diligently to attend to the Sentence, and Laſt Determination of their Eternal State. *For then will the King of Heaven ſay to the Good on his right hand; Come ye Bleſſed of my Father inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the World.* But *to the Goats* (i. e.) to the Wicked, the Senſual, the Profane, *Depart from me ye Curſed into everlaſting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* And according to this Sentence; *Theſe ſhall go away into Everlaſting Puniſhments; But the Righteous into Life Eternal.*

Much more might be fetcht from our Holy Oracles to this purpoſe; but that I propoſe to treat

more particularly on this hereafter. It may poſſibly rather be expected, that before I allege the Declarations of the Goſpel about this matter: I ſhould ſay ſomething of the Truth, and Divine Authority of the Chriſtian Religion in particular. And as I am ſenſible that the Humour, and the Vices of the Age we live in, do too much require it: ſo we have Strong and Clear, and weighty Arguments to plead in its behalf. As,

Evidences of the Truth of Chriſtianity.

I. The Multitude of Prophecies and Predictions concerning Jeſus Chriſt, which have pointed out the Time of his coming into the World; the Condition of his Life, and the Circumſtances of his Death. Even the ſmalleſt contingencies, as the parting his Garments, and caſting Lots for his Coat; and piercing his Side; and preventing his Bones from being Broken. All theſe things were deſcribed before-hand, with ſo much Exactneſs, and ſo Expreſly, ſo Particularly, that nothing could poſſibly ſo foretel thoſe Events, but only the Bleſſed Spirit of God; who deſign'd by theſe Prophecies to give Light to the World, and Authority to his Laws;

Laws; when Chriſt our Saviour ſhould appear.

II. We have next the Excellency of his Doctrines; which teach all manner of Goodneſs ſo perfectly; enjoyn it ſo ſtrictly; and preſs Men to every Virtue ſo earneſtly: that all this cannot Poſſibly proceed from Impoſture and a Spirit of Deluſion.

III. We have the ſtupendous Miracles and Wonders done by him; ſo many in Number, ſo Publicly wrought; ſo Plainly exceeding all the power of Natural Cauſes: that they muſt extort the ſame Confeſſion from us all, that they did from the ſtubborn Jews; and oblige us to acknowledge, that *No man can do ſuch things without God be with him.*

IV. Laſtly, we have the wonderful Propagation of it; by very unlikely means; not by Force, and Violence; not by the Dint of the Sword, and the conſtraint of Civil Powers. Not by the Barbarities of an Inquiſition; or the Butchery of Dragoons; But againſt all the Rage and Fury of theſe, and all attempts to ſuppreſs it. By Martyrdom and Sufferings, and ſevere Perſecutions,

which nothing could have Enabled Men, nothing could have Prevail'd upon them to endure : but a firm Conviction of its Truth, and a Longing Desire of its Glorious Rewards.

But I forbear to persue these Arguments ; both that I may not exceed the bounds intended for this Discourse ; and also because I am apt to think that none will much question the Truth of Christianity, who are in good Earnest true Friends to any Religion at all. Those who have a Real Kindness, and a Sincere Zeal for Natural Religion : may easily be convinced of the Certainty and Excellency of the Revealed. I proceed therefore,

The improvement of all these Reflections.

III. Lastly, To consider how Forceable a Motive we have herein to be Zealous and Sincere in it. And this will not take up much time. For if nothing can Justify Profaneness and Hypocrisie, and wilfull Impiety but only Falshood and Imposture in Religion it self : Then in the Certainty of its Principles, we cannot but discern the Indispensable Obligations that lie upon us to live up to it. And that particularly from this conclusion, which naturally

naturally ariſes from theſe Premiſes; *viz,* That Man muſt Certainly give an account to God for all the Actions of this Life. This is the Dangerous Reflection that gives ſuch a Terrible Shock to Sinners in the midſt of all their Gaiety; and which they are therefore ſo very Deſirous to be Rid of: that they Violently Oppoſe every Doctrine that ſeems to Favour and Aſſert it. They would believe neither a God, nor Providence, nor a Future State after this Life: only becauſe they would not be Accountable for their preſent Immoralities. And if they could Prove any one of theſe Principles falſe: they would gain their point; and the *Epicurean* Doctrines of Libertiniſm and Senſuality muſt inevitably take place. Then the Voluptuous might indulge himſelf in Pleaſures without reſtraint: and the Sinner might go on in his Profaneneſs and Immorality, without Reluctancy or Remorſe. Then, however it, might be Reaſonable and Wiſe for Men to prefer a Virtuous Life before a Wicked one: Yet thoſe who by long Habits in Vice are ſtrongly Addicted to their Luſts,

Luſts would have no Effectual reſtraint upon them. The greateſt check all is in this Concluſion; that if there be a God, and Providence, and another State after Death: Man muſt be Accountable to that God for all his Converſation. *Rejoyce then O young Man in thy Youth, and let thy heart chear thee in the days of thy Youth; and walk in the ways of thine Heart, and in the ſight of thine Eyes: but know that for all theſe things God will bring thee to Judgment.*

Eccleſ. 11. 9.

Theſe are the thoughts that Sour Mens Delights, and Interrupt their Pleaſures, and are found mighty Terrible. And there is great Reaſon that they ſhould be ſo. For thoſe who are conſcious to themſelves of Great Impieties, and yet feel not the effects of God's Diſpleaſure here: have the Greateſt reaſon of all Men upon Earth, to Believe, and Fear a Future Judgment to come hereafter. For if there be Faith, and Juſtice, and Holineſs in God; it neceſſarily muſt be ſo.

What mighty Charms then can there be in Sinful Pleaſures after this Conſideration? For if a Man ſhall not Ceaſe

Ceaſe to be when he leaves this World; if Death be not our End, but only a Paſſage into another State; why ſhould we not Provide to be Happy There, as well as we do Here? We ſhall certainly have as Quick a Sence both of Joy and Sufferings then as we have now. Why then ſhould it not be Terrible and Grievous, to be Miſerable in the next World, as well as it is in this?

Suppoſe then that Wicked Men had the beſt of it here. This is a thing very hard to be Granted. There are a great many things firſt to be Conſidered. But ſuppoſe it were True, yet it would not make it a Reaſonable thing to be Wicked and Irreligious: becauſe our Days here are very few. We muſt leave this World to morrow, that is in a very little while. He that meaſures the time to Come; by that which is already Paſt: will ſee that the Life of Man is Nothing in compariſon. Twenty, or Thirty, or Forty Years when gone, ſeem but as Yeſterday. And the Years to Come will be no longer than thoſe already Paſt. 'Tis then

then at the longeſt but a *very little while*, before Rich and Poor, High and Low, the Voluptuous and the Afflicted muſt lye down in the Duſt together. The ſparkling Wine ſhall no longer warm their Blood; Their wanton Loves muſt have an End, their Stately Palaces be left behind; the Tabret and Lute muſt ceaſe; the Melodious Voice be ſtill: and all Senſual and Sinful Pleaſures be for ever buried in the Grave. But what is moſt to be lamented: the Guilt does not dye too. This attends them to the other World, and brings a long train of Miſeries and Torments after it. Thus the Wicked Man's pleaſures end, and here his Miſery begins. And if the pleaſures of a Senſual Life, ſhall be found to have Deceived and Beguiled his Expectations: his Condition is very deplorable. For there remains nothing after it, but Lamentation and Mourning, and Woe without End. And whoever recollects, that the Miſeries of the next World, are deſign'd by a Juſt and Angry God, to Chaſtiſe and Puniſh the Wickedneſs of this: cannot doubt but that the Puniſhment

niſhment of Sin, will far exceed the Pleaſures of it.

Had it not been better then for ſuch Men, to have Denied themſelves a little more, and to have forborn their Delights; eſpecially ſuch as are Sinful and Criminal: that they might have ſecur'd themſelves for Ever? Had it not been better for them to have lived Virtuouſly and Innocently; to have conformed to the Precepts of the Goſpel, and done Good; which, perhaps even here on Earth has the better of it too; but, moſt certainly would have prevented their Future Miſery, and have made them Happy to all Eternity?

This is what almoſt every thing we caſt our Eyes upon, gives us ſome reaſon to expect. For whil'ſt we Contemplate the Works of the Creation; behold the ſplendor of the Sun and the beauty of the Stars; the Immenſe Extent of the Sea; and the Compaſs of the Earth; the Happy Interchanges of Day and Night, Winter and Summer, Spring and Autumn; in how Curious and Wonderful a manner Fruits grow; by what Springs of Animal Spirits Beaſts

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Beaſts live and move; with how great Reaſon and Underſtanding Man Thinks, and Talks, and Conſults, and Acts; whil'ſt we contemplate theſe things, and in this contemplation apprehend them to be the Works of God, and find in them the Legible Characters of Infinite Wiſdom, Power and Goodneſs: we ſhould conſider, that all theſe things are as ſtrong Evidences of our Happineſs in being Sincerely Religious; and of our miſery in being Wicked: as they are of the Being of a God, and of his Providence over the World. For if there be a God, and He does Govern the World in Righteouſneſs: there muſt be an inſeperable Connexion between Holineſs and Happineſs.

Methinks then it ſhould be no diſagreeable thing for Men to entertain themſelves with ſuch thoughts as theſe. The God that made this Sun, this Moon, theſe Stars, this Day, this Night, made me. And he that Preſerves and Governs all theſe things, Preſerves and Governs me. He is certainly Juſt, and Holy, and Good: for the name of God implies all this. And he that is Ho-

ly

ly abhors Sin, and he that is Juſt will Puniſh it. It concerns me therefore to take care of my Life and Actions; to Honour, and Obey my Maker, which are the things he made me for. If I do not, his Juſtice will certainly overtake me. For he *is wiſe in Heart and mighty in Power, and no Man ever hardened himſelf againſt him and proſpered.* If he ſpares Men in this Life: there is the more cauſe to believe and expect another after it. For this Holy and Juſt God cannot but ſo order affairs: that Good Men ſhall be Happy, and the Wicked Miſerable in the End. Job. 9. 4.

I muſt therefore either Reſolve to be truly Religious, and ſerve him faithfully, according to his Laws Revealed in the Goſpel: or I ſhall certainly be ruin'd. I read in the Scripture that God is to the Wicked *a conſuming Fire.* 'Tis therefore a Fearful thing to fall into his Hands when he is angry. His Judgments muſt be very Terrible, and I know not how ſoon I may be ſummoned to appear before him. It muſt be within a few Days; and I know not but it may be to Morrow.

I will not then ſuffer the alluring Pleaſures of Sin, nor the ſollicitations of my vile Affections and Luſts any longer to Deceive and Abuſe me. Seeing I muſt live after I leave this World, I will make ſome Proviſion that it may not be worſe with me then than now. I know not how to live in Torments, and yet I know not how I can avoid them: if I live a Wicked and Ungodly Life. I will therefore in compaſſion to my Soul, break off from thoſe Vices I have committed; I will Humble my ſelf before my Offended God, and on my Bended knees implore his Mercy in the pardon of my Sins, and the aſſiſtance of his Grace in the reformation of my Life. And ſeeing dye I muſt, if it be poſſible, I will dye with Comfort; and leave this World with a good aſſurance, that the next ſhall be more completely happy.

Methinks theſe thoughts are ſo Natural, that they ſhould be the daily Meditations of every one that believes the Truth of his Religion. And if they do not prove an effectual Motive to a Holy Life, 'tis an Evidence of great Depravity indeed.

For

For ſuch Men muſt be without both the Love of God, and the Love of themſelves, and live inſenſible both of Duty and of Danger too.

CHAP III.

The Reaſonableneſs of Religious Duties.

WHEN the Principles of Religion are found Certain, and Rational, and nothing is to be pleaded againſt them but what admits of a Fair and Satisfactory anſwer: Men then begin to except againſt the Reaſonableneſs of its Duties; to cry out that the *way of the Lord is not equal*; that his Commands are too Strict; and his Precepts too Severe for Frail Fleſh and Blood to comply with; and that Laws ſo Pure and Holy, and Refin'd, are fitter for Angels than for Men. And thus they are full of Complaints of the Hardſhips and Difficulties to be met with in the obſervance of them. And if this Plea may be admitted as Juſt,

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they would hope and depend upon it, that a Gracious God would never be ſo Rigorous as is pretended, in exacting Obedience: but make great Allowances and Mitigations for the Circumſtances of Humane Nature. Or if no Abatements could be made, yet it would ſeem at leaſt to Vindicate the Wiſdom of their choice: to neglect and overlook a Religion ſo mighty Grievous and Severe.

Our next buſineſs therefore muſt be, to conſider whether there is any juſt force in ſuch Exceptions and Complaints. And if inſtead of this, it ſhall appear upon a fair enquiry; that God's Laws are all Juſt and Reaſonable: this may be urg'd as a farther Motive and Obligation to a Zealous and Sincere Obedience. For the more Righteous and Equitable the duties are: the more highly Criminal will every Tranſgreſſion and Offence be accounted.

In what the Reaſonableneſs of Religion conſiſts.

Now it muſt be conſidered that in Moral Actions and Religious Practices, nothing can be Unreaſonable, nor very Difficult and Hard, but what is Diſagreeable and Contrary to the Powers and Principles of our Being;

ing; to the Dictates of our Minds, and the Diſpoſitions of our Nature; or to our Relation and Condition upon Earth. If there be any thing of Difficulty or Irkſomeneſs in Religion, it muſt proceed from ſome or all of theſe particulars. And if there be any thing of this to be complain'd of, it's reaſonable that it ſhould be heard, and it will no doubt be conſidered both by God and Man, according to all the Juſt Force that's in it. But if there be nothing in it all, but what is very ſuitable to the Dignity of our Nature, and the Principles of our Mind; nothing but what is for our Intereſt, and very becoming our Relation and Condition: ours muſtneeds be a very Reaſonable Service and a very Excellent Religion.

The Method then to be obſerved in the Proſecution of this matter muſt be this.

1. Briefly to go through the ſeveral Duties that make up the ſum of it, and ſhew how agreeable they are to the Principles of Reaſon, and how naturally they ariſe, from a right underſtanding of our ſelves, and our circumſtances. And then,

2. To proceed to conſider thoſe particular Duties at which Men ſeem moſt Offended; and to Vindicate them from the uſual cavils, and objections made againſt them. And then,

3. Laſtly, To apply theſe conſiderations alſo to our purpoſe.

1. I ſhall briefly go through the ſeveral Duties that make up the ſum of Religion; to ſhew how agreeable they are to the Reaſon of Mankind: and how naturally they ariſe from a right underſtanding of our Selves, and our Circumſtances. Now all theſe, are either ſuch whereby we acknowledge our Subjection to, and Dependance on Almighty God: Or elſe ſuch, whereby we conſult the Honour of our own Nature, and the Preſervation of our Being; Or Laſtly, ſuch whereby we contribute to the Good of other Men, and the Intereſt of all Mankind in general; in which every particular Man is more or leſs concerned. And if in all theſe, there be found nothing, but what is very agreeable to our Nature and becoming our Relation to God, and to our Brethren: ours ſure muſt be a very Reaſonable Religion. And

And all this will want no laborious proof; we are here in the clear light of the Sun; and it will coſt us no more pains than to open our Eyes, that we may behold its Splendor. Do but conſider what God requires: and the Equity of his Laws ſufficiently diſplays it ſelf, and cannot be hid: I ſhall begin then,

1. With thoſe Duties we immediately owe to God, that is, by which we acknowledge our ſubjection to, and Dependance on him. And the firſt I ſhall mention is Love. *Duties to God.*

Now what is more reaſonable than that we Love God, who is Infinite in Perfections, the Greateſt and moſt Deſirable Good; and from whom all that's Good, and valuable beſides is borrowed, and derived? But what more nearly concerns us, and is more likely to affect us; he is good to us, and does us good. We are Fed by his Bounty; Protected by his Power, and Comforted by his Bleſſings. Whatſoever we have receiv'd; whatever we poſſeſs; whatever we hope for; whatever we have any true Comfort from; or can take any delight in; except only our *Love.*

Sins: all other delights are the Gifts of God, and demonſtrations of his Love. So that if Goodneſs and Kindneſs be the proper Objects and Motives of our Love, as the great Maſters in Reaſon and Philoſophy tell us they are: then it can be no unreaſonable thing to love God, and to love him above all things elſe, becauſe he is infinitely Good and Kind.

Honour. The next Duty we owe to him, is to Honour him; which is no more than to entertain worthy Thoughts of, and to Praiſe him, for his Excellencies, and Sovereign Dominion over all. And there can be nothing unreaſonable in this. *For great is the Lord, and greatly to praiſed*, and worthy to be had in Honour; *Honour and Majeſty are before him, Strength and Beauty are in his Sanctuary. If a Son honoureth his Father and a Servant his Maſter*: God is our Father for he made us; and we are his Servants as we are his Creatures. And therefore methinks it cannot be unreaſonable, or unjuſt, that in the Contemplation of his Power: we fall low on our knees before him,

Pſ. 96. 4. 6.

Mal. 1. 6.

and

and cry out with the Twenty Four Elders: *Worthy art thou, O Lord God to receive Glory and Honour, and Power. For thou haſt created all things, and for thy pleaſure they are and were created*: Or with the Seraphims, *Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hoſts: the whole Earth is full of thy Glory.* Rev. 4.11. Eſa. 6. 3.

Fear.

Next to Honour, we may put Fear as ariſing from the ſame Attributes, *Great is the Lord, and greatly to be feared above all Gods.* His Vengeance is terrible and his Judgments are ſevere. He is a God *that is a conſuming fire*, and who can ſtand before him when he is angry; or who can deliver out of his hands? *He will bring every ſecret thing to Judgment, whether it be Good, or whether it be Evil.* And he is *able to deſtroy both Body and Soul in Hell*, who then can behold *the Terrors of the Lord ſet in array againſt him*, and yet not be afraid? This is ſo far from being unreaſonable, that thoſe who labour with all their might to baffle their own Reaſon, and to bend their whole force that way: find it extreamly Difficult, if not utterly Im- Eccleſ. 12. 14. Mat. 10. 28.

poſſible, to cure, and to put off theſe fears.

Truſt. Next we may conſider the Duty of Truſting in God, and caſting our Care upon him, and relying upon his Providence for the ſupply of our Wants, and our Deliverance out of Dangers, and Troubles. This both the daily experience we have of his Bounty, and any tolerable ſenſe of our own Weakneſs; will ſufficiently evidence to be highly reaſonable. For is it not in God *that we live, and move, and have our Being*? Is it not *he that giveth all Life and Breath, and all things? That has given us Rain from Heaven, and fruitful Seaſons, filling our hearts with Food and Gladneſs?*

Acts, 17. 25. 28.

Acts, 14. 16.

And if at any time the Clouds gather black over our Heads; Dangers encompaſs, and Troubles afflict us: Does not the ſenſe of our own weakneſs, and our incapacity to help our ſelves; ſufficiently juſtifie us in having recourſe to one, who has more Power, and not leſs Kindneſs for us than we have for our ſelves? How little can we do in our own defence? we cannot ſo much as give life to a dead Flie. We cannot prevent one

Hair

Hair of our Head from falling to the Ground, nor add a new one in its place. Can then ſuch poor, helpleſs Creatures as we, do any thing Wiſer, or Better, than to unload our ſelves of our Vexatious Solicitude, and Burdenſome Care; and caſt it all on God, and comfort our ſelves in our Dependance on him? He wants not Power to relieve us; for he is Almighty; *and if the foundations of the Earth were ſhaken*, and the whole Frame of the Creation diſjoynted: that God whom we ſerve is able to deliver us. And which is our trueſt comfort: God is not more powerful than he is Willing and Kind. He loves us with the love of a Father, and he gave his only Son to be crucified and die for us. *And he that ſpared not his only Son but freely gave him for us: how ſhall he not alſo with him freely give us all things?* Where then is the unreaſonableneſs of repoſing our Confidence and Truſt: where we find ſo much Kindneſs, and ſo much Goodneſs joyn'd with Infinite and Almighty Power?

Pſ. 46. 2.

Rom. 8. 32.

As a neceſſary conſequence from our Dependance on God, proceeds our obligation

Prayer.

obligation to Pray unto him; and what, according to the practice, and ſenſe of all Mankind is more reaſonable, than to ask for the bleſſings we Want and Deſire to receive: of him, who alone can give them? And to make known the neceſſities we would have ſupplied: to him, who alone is able to ſuccour, and aſſiſt us, when we cannot help our ſelves? Nay this does not only juſtifie our Prayers, but methinks ſhould engage us to be Frequent, and Earneſt, and Devout in our Supplications; that God, the Fountain of all mercies, has ſignified to us by more inſtances than one, and particularly by that importunate Widdow. That though we Deſerve not his Favour; though we are utterly Unworthy of his Mercies: yet he will ſuffer himſelf to be won by entreaty; and to be overcome by the importunity of our Prayers, and the fervency of our Zealous Requeſts.

Luk. 18.

Thanks-giving.

And if it be fit we ſhould make our Supplications to God for what we Want, 'tis fit alſo that we ſhould give him hearty, and unfeigned Thanks, for what we have received.

The

The whole race of Mankind notwithſtanding all our Corruptions and Depravity, Abhor and Deteſt Ingratitude as infamouſly Vile, and Baſe. And therefore no Man ſure can imagine it an unreaſonable thing, to be thankful to God for all his Benefits and Bleſſings.

Obedience.

Theſe are the chief of thoſe Duties that we owe immediately to God; unleſs I ſhould add Obedience which indeed comprehends the whole. And this cannot be thought unreaſonable, when we conſider that God's Authority is unqueſtionable, and for ought yet appears, the Laws are as Equal, and Righteous, as the Rewards are Glorious, and the Puniſhments ſevere. Wherefore,

Duties towards our ſelves.

2. Come we next to thoſe Duties that we owe to our ſelves, as; Humility, Meekneſs, Contentment, Chaſtity, Temperance and Sobriety; all which are juſt and Equal in every point, and both Becoming and Advantageous.

Humility.

What more Reaſonable than Humility? That is, that a Man ſhould think himſelf neither Greater, nor Better than he is. In reſpect to God,

a poor, infirm, helpleſs Creature; not able to live, or move without the Aſſiſtance of his Maker. And in reſpect of Men, deſcended of the ſame common Stock with all his deſpiſed Brethren; Sinful *Adam* and Deluded *Eve*, and encompaſs'd with the ſame Infirmities, and liable to the ſame Calamities. We have all one Original, made of Duſt, and to Duſt we muſt return. And if one Man has more Wealth, greater Honour, Wit, Strength or Beauty than his Brother: how ſmall, and of little value are theſe things in compariſon of that which makes a Man? And here we are all equal.

Beſides, who made the difference? Did not he who made the Rich, make the Poor? And he that made the Wiſe make the Fool; and he that made the Potentate make the Peaſant alſo? What then has any Man that he has not received? And why ſhould the Crow ſtrut in borrowed Plumes? Can it be reaſonable for any Man ſo far to exalt himſelf, as to deſpiſe his fellow Creatures, for thoſe things which are not his own? When moreover they are no ſure

Evidence

Evidence of the Favour of him that gave them. For God beſtows theſe things promiſcuouſly *on the Evil and the Good.* Nay perhaps the poor deſpicable Creature that ſhall be looked on with Contempt : may in the End be found the happier Man of the two. For who that minds the event of things, would not be poor *Lazarus*, rather than the haughty Creature that would once ſcarce feed him with his Dogs? And if Pride can make Men miſerable for ever; how can it be unreaſonable for the Greateſt Man in the World to be humble?

Meekneſs.

The next are Meekneſs and Contentment; and is not Meekneſs an Happineſs, when Fury is a Torment, and tranſports of Paſſion are Irkſom Convulſions of the Mind; and Rage is a Serpent, a Viper, that Stings and Wounds the Breaſts that nouriſh it?

Contentment.

Or is not Contentment Reaſonable in the worſt Eſtate; When the worſt is better than we have merited from God? And impatience will not leſſen any Calamity, nor heal our Wounds: but may add to the anguiſh of them, and make them ſmart the more ſeverely. Or,

Chaſtity. Or is not Chaſtity Reaſonable? When unlawful Luſt wounds the Conſcience; Defaces all the faculties of the Soul; Defiles, and Rots, and Putrifies the Body; frequently ſhortens life or brings on before its time decrepit Old Age, with all its contemptible Infirmities; cauſes certain Shame, and Scandal: and poſſibly Want, and Poverty into the bargain.

Temperance, Or is not Temperance reaſonable? When Gluttony overloads Nature, feeds not the Man but his Luſts: that are the worſt Enemies he has. Breeds Sickneſs, and Diſeaſes; Surfeits, Calentures, Feavers; and impairs the Health that Eating was deſign'd to preſerve; and deſtroys the Life it ſhould prolong. And does not Exceſs in Drink do the ſame? Isit reaſonable that a Man ſhould deface his Reaſon, deſtroy himſelf, become a Sot, drown his Senſes, and expoſe himſelf to a Hundred Dangers, and a Thouſand Follies that he muſt repent of? Theſe are the common effects of Intemperance and Exceſs.

Suppoſe then that there were no God, nor any other Life but this: it would

would not even then be Reaſonable that a Man ſhould thus debaſe himſelf. Even then he were bound for his own preſent Good, and Safety: to obſerve theſe Duties, and avoid theſe Vices.

3. Nor is there leſs Reaſon in thoſe that concern our Brethren. Can there be more reaſon in any Law whatever: than in that which is the Foundation of all Juſtice, *Whatſoever ye would that Men ſhould do to you, do you ſo unto them?* Is it meet that he ſhould Steal, who himſelf would not be robbed? Is it reaſonable that he ſhould defile the Wife or Daughter of his Neighbour: that would not willingly proſtitute his own? Is it fit that he ſhould unjuſtly kill another Man, who would ſave his own Throat? Or is it juſt that he ſhould break his Promiſe or his Faith: that would have other Men be true to him? *To our Neighbour.* *Juſtice.* Mat. 7. 12.

And as for Charity, or doing Good; what is there Unreaſonable in it? Is it not Juſt and Fit, that a Man ſhould love his fellow Creature, and his Brother; One born of the ſame common Parents; made of the ſame Earth; *Charity.*

Earth; Endowed with the ſame Faculties; Redeemed by the ſame Blood; and Entitled to the ſame Eternal Glory? Is there any reaſon that a Man ſhould ſee his poor Indigent Neighbour in diſtreſs, and not have Compaſſion on, or not relieve him? Is there any thing Barbarous and Cruel in our Nature: but what by Wickedneſs is acquired? Why ſhould not then a Man do all the Good, and give all the aſſiſtance he can, to others: who knows not what the Morrow may bring forth; or how ſoon Adverſities and Calamities may fall upon himſelf? *Remember them that are in Bonds, as bound with them; and them which ſuffer Adverſity, as being your ſelves alſo in the body.*

Heb. 13. 3.

Forgiving Injuries.

Or Laſtly, where is the unreaſonableneſs of forgiving Injuries, and loving Enemies? Of o'recoming the ill natur'd Principles of Malice, and Revenge. For according to the Sentiments of the Wiſeſt Heathens, the deſire of Revenge was ever Eſteemed as an Argument of a little Soul, and unmaſculine Spirit.

Juven. *Sat.* 13. 190.

——— ——— ——— ——— *Quippe minuti*
Semper & infirmi eſt animi Exiguiq voluptas
Ultio.

Ultio, continuo ſic collige, quod vindicta
Nemo magis gaudet quam fœmina.

When *Tully* was playing the Orator, then indeed he ſays. *Mihi Importunus & Ferreus ille videtur, &c.* That to put up Injuries was a piece of Stupidity, and that Sufferings are alleviated by the Miſeries of Enemies. But when he writes as a Philoſopher, and had a more ſtrict regard to Truth: then he changes his thoughts, and writes in another Strain. *Nec ignoſcendi qui graviter iraſcendum inimicis putant; idq; magni, & fortis viri, eſſe cenſent, Nihil laudabilius, nihil magno & præclaro viro dignius placabilitate & clementiâ.* He tells us *'tis a fault to be too much incens'd againſt an Enemy; and no part of a Great and Noble Mind. That nothing is more commendable, or more truly worthy a Man of Honour, than Placableneſs and Clemency.*

in Catalin. 4.

De Offic. 1. 15.

And if the forgiving Injuries be a Reaſonable and a Noble thing, in point of Honour, and Magnimity: 'tis much more ſo in reſpect to the Good and Benefit of Mankind. For what a mad confuſed World, would this we live in be; and how

The Miſchiefs of Revenge.

in a perpetual ſtate of War: if Men were left to be their own Avengers? The Wolf would never want an accuſation againſt the Lamb. And how would the Tranſports of Paſſion, and the bitter Reſentments and Real, to ſay nothing of feigned, and pretended Injuries; how would they carry Men too far; tempt them to Oppreſs, and give them a prætext to all manner of Miſchiefs and Villanies: under the colour of doing Juſtice to themſelves. Where is there one Man of a Thouſand, but would, either through his ungenerous Reſentments, and Malice; or elſe through greedineſs of gain; or elſe through Covetouſneſs; be puſht on to commit a ſecond, and perhaps a greater injury to his Enemy, under pretence of vindicating the firſt? Do we not ſee this every Day upon the ſmalleſt Trifles? Does not the giving the Lye, or the calling Fool, even among familiar Friends, ſometimes create ſuch Fury, and fiery Indignation in Mens Breaſts, as nothing can quench but their Enemies Blood? Do not a Multitude of thoſe Miſeries and ſore Calamities, under which

which Mankind labour, proceed from Quarrels and Contentions; Malicious, and Revengeful Reſentments? And that too when the petty affronts that breed the feuds: have not been æquivalent to any one of the leaſt of thoſe numerous Evils they have produced? How much Blood has been ſhed in our Streets, and how many Souls have fallen to the Ground, almoſt every day, upon fooliſh Trifles, not worth the life of a Flie? An haſty word, ſpoken ſo much without Malice or Deſign, that 'tis often without thought, ſhall draw two Swords, and endanger two Lives. An Imaginary Offence that tends not ſo much to the diſquiet of a Mans Life, as the ſtinging of a Gnat, muſt not with our Men of Honour be expiated, but by ſheathing a Sword in the Offenders Bowels. Where is the Bravery, or where is the Reaſon of this? And is not the decay of Religion, and a loſs of the juſt Senſe of its Obligations, too Manifeſt, and Juſtly to be lamented, in theſe Pernicious and Deplorable Effects? And where is the Hardſhip, if God has taken from us that Liber-

ty; which Man would certainly make uſe of, and pervert to ſo ill purpoſes?

Pro. 15. 1. *A ſoft anſwer breaketh the Bone*, ſaith the Wiſe Man, *and turneth away Wrath; when grievous words ſtir up Strife.* Rancor and Malice engender Quarrels and Contentions. And our Wiſe and Gracious God has moſt evidently conſulted the good of Mankind; and the Comfort, Peace and ſafety of our preſent Lives: by commanding us *to love Enemies, to forgive Injuries, and to recompence Evil with Good.* And there is nothing unreaſonable, or ſevere in it.

I have thus, I think, gone through all the Principle Duties of Religion, and the ſum of what God requires from us, as the Condition of the ſalvation of our Souls. And upon a fair Determination I can find nothing in it all, but what is very Rational, and agreeable to the Principles of our Minds, and becoming the Circumſtances we are in. So that if God ſhould Expoſtulate with us, as

Ezk. 18. 25. he once did with the Jews, *Are not my ways equal, and yours unequal, O Houſe of Iſrael?* We muſt lay our Hands upon our Mouths, to ſtop all Murmurs,

Murmurs, and Complaints. Nay rather muſt we not break out into open acknowledgments, and confeſſions of his Juſtice? *Righteous art thou, O Lord in all thy ways, and holy in all thy Works.* If God might make this appeal to the Jews, who were bound to offer coſtly Sacrifices, and to obſerve burthenſom Ceremonies: much more ſafely may he appeal to Chriſtians; all whoſe Duties are founded upon Principles of Reaſon, and the Laws of our very Being; and carry Convincing Evidence of their Excellency and their Obligations in their very Natures. What then can there be in ſuch a Religion as this, that a Reaſonable Creature ſhould not readily comply with, and obey, without any Reluctancy and Reſerve? Pſ. 145. 17.

Had the Laws of our Religion been Juſtly Obnoxious to the heavy Charge with which our Senſual Libertines ſo often Load them; yet ſince they have their Sanction from the Almighty, whoſe Authority is not to be diſputed; and whoſe Vengeance is intolerable, *ingens telum neceſſitas*; even then Obedience were our trueſt Wiſdom; becauſe the Mi-

ſery and Torments to be endured when God ſhall puniſh; muſt be much more Grievous than the obſervance of the ſevereſt Law. There would indeed then be more Specious matter of complaint, and we might mutually condole our Hardſhip. But the greateſt Wiſdom would be, to make the beſt of ſo bad a Caſe; and to chooſe the leaſt of thoſe Evils, both of which could not be avoided.

But it is ſcarce pardonable in me to make ſuch a Suppoſition. For the Goodneſs, and Juſtice of God are as conſpicuous in the Laws of the Goſpel, as either his Majeſty or his Power in the eſtabliſhment of it. If the one Alarms and Terrifies, and raiſes our Admiration: the other Conciliates and Invites our Love. Nor can the Vengeance, or Wrath of God in puniſhing Sinners, exceed the Meaſure of our Baſeneſs, or our Folly in diſobeying his Commands. How does it then concern, and how does it become us, to be Wiſe and Good? To lay aſide every Weight, to abandon every Luſt, and to be diligent, and Sincere, in ſo Juſt and Reaſonable a Service.

But

But theſe Reflections will perhaps be thought more Seaſonable, and more Proper, after we have heard our Adverſaries Plea, and conſidered what may be objected againſt the Duties of the Goſpel. This indeed is

2. The Second thing propoſed; To conſider thoſe particular Duties at which Men ſeem moſt offended; and to Vindicate them from the uſual Cavils and Objections made againſt them. And they I think, after what has been ſaid above, are chiefly two to be conſidered here.

1. Self-Denial, or the Mortification of our Luſts, and Appetites. And,

2. The taking up the Croſs, and ſuffering Perſecution for Religion.

As to the Objections made againſt the reaſonableneſs of Faith, they belong moſt properly to our firſt Motive; from the Truth of our Religion, and the Certainty of its Principles.

And as to the Practical Duties to be obſerved in the Government of our Lives: I think none liable to any conſiderable Charge, but the two already mentioned.

The Reaſonableneſs of Self-denial.

1. The Duty of Self-denial, or Mortification of our Luſts. It is thought hard, that a Man ſhould be oblig'd to ſubdue his Natural Appetites; and to act contrary to the Inclinations, which God who made him, has put into him. To be drawn one way by Nature, and another by Duty; This is ſay ſome, to be bound to live contrary to the Principles of our Being, and muſt, as they think, make Religion Irkſome, and Unreaſonable. I Anſwer in General;

That may be Unpleaſant, which diſagrees with our corrupt Affections, and ſenſual Deſires: but nothing is Unreaſonable but what is contrary to the Dictates and Principles of our Minds. It may be unpleaſant for a Sick Man to take Phyſick, though for the recovery of his Health: for there are but few Medicines Savory, and Palatable. But no Man will ſay it is Unreaſonable. So as to Religion, it is not to be denied, that it lays a reſtraint upon our Corrupt Affections, and Deſires, and Senſual Appetites; and conſequently may be Ungrateful to him, that is

Strongly

Strongly inclin'd to give a Looſe thereto. And indeed if it were not, there would be but little occaſion of Importuning, and Soliciting Men, either from the Pulpit, or the Preſs; our Preaching would be needleſs; Men would want no Motives, no Perſuaſions to Religion; but would freely, and of themſelves become *Holy in all manner of Converſation*. It is the *Luſt of the Fleſh*, Warring againſt *the Law of the Mind*: that gives both them, and us the trouble.

But however Unpleaſant this Warfare may be: yet it cannot be thought Unreaſonable, becauſe thoſe Natural Indiſpoſitions to Religion, that Men complain of; are not truly and properly Natural, nor were they Originally derived from God: but proceed from the Corruption of our Nature, and are derived from our firſt Parents, and from our ſelves. God without all Queſtion made Mankind more Upright and Perfect, and gave him Regular Appetites and Deſires; and ſuch as were eaſily ſubject to the ſound Dictates of his Untainted Reaſon and Conſcience;

ence; and then Religion could have no Difficulties, or Hardſhips. And if the Condition of Mankind is not the ſame ſtill, 'tis owing to the Diſobedience of Mankind; and a conſequence of our Revolt and Degeneracy from the firſt State, in which we were Originally Created.

But here I muſt expect to have it objected, that however this firſt came to paſs, 'tis a misfortune faln on us without either our Choice, or Knowledge: and it was in God's power only, not our own, to have prevented it; and this makes it the ſame thing to us. To this plea I have ſeveral things to anſwer. As

Our different Appetites the trial of our Virtue.

1. That as this was not Originally from God, ſo he was not concerned, either in Juſtice or Reaſon to prevent it; in that in a Conflict with theſe Appetites and Deſires is the ſole Trial of Virtue. To approve our ſelves to God, and acquit our ſelves like Men in this Service; is the main buſineſs of a Chriſtians Life. Our preſent State on Earth is, and was deſign'd by Almighty God, a State of Trial and Probation; wherein he is pleaſed to make Experiment

ment of us; that he may Reward or Puniſh us according to our Works. Now if there were in Man no Propenſity, no inclinations to Vice, where would be the Trial; or at leaſt where would be the Commendation in being Virtuous? The Virtue conſiſts in Mortifying Luſts, in ſubduing diſorderly Appetites; and doing Good; when we are Allured and Tempted to do Wickedly. So that it is ſo far from being juſt matter of Complaint, that Man has ſuch Appetites as incline him contrary to his Duty: that indeed, the very End for which we live on Earth, being to make Trial of us, neceſſarily requires it. The weathering of theſe Difficulties is our Glory, our Commendation; and that for which we are to be Eternally rewarded. If we had no Luſts within to vanquiſh, our praiſe would be the leſs for being Virtuous. If there were no Enemy there would be no Victory; If no War; no Trophy, no Triumph.

And it may not be improper here to add, that againſt all this Corruption of our Appetites: God has laid a proportionable reſtraint upon us by

by the Law of our Minds, ſo that if the one inclines us to do Evil; the other invites and calls upon us to do Good. This is what we call Conſcience; the Wounds and Terrors of which are ſo mighty Dreadful: that till Men have hardened their Hearts; and by extraordinary Iniquities defaced the Image of God within them; the Torments of any Sin equal, and often exceed the Pleaſures of it.

There can therefore be no extream hardſhip in ſubduing the Natural Corruption of our Appetites; becauſe the Law of our Minds is a more forceable inducement to do Good: than the Law of our Members to do Evil. If it were not, the Convictions of Conſcience could not be ſo terrible. If it be, the Hardſhip is not Great, nor Grievous. It would be a Grievance indeed to have Vicious Appetites within; if we had no reſtraint at all upon them: but ſeeing we have an equivolent Ballance on the other hand, and Power to overcome by the aſſiſtance of Grace, if we be not wanting in our Care; this can be no hardſhip; this is no more than what is neceſſa-

ry

ry to make Trial, how well, or ill, we may deſerve of God.

2. And this brings me to the Second thing to be conſidered in the Difficulties we meet with from the Natural depravity of our Bodily Appetites, *viz.* that beſides the Powers of Natural Conſcience, God graciouſly affords ſufficient ſupplies of Strength and Capacity, from the Aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit: which all may obtain if they are not wanting to themſelves. Sufficient ſupplies I ſay, to carry us ſafe through all the Difficulties we meet with; and to enable us to ſuch degrees of Holineſs, as ſhall certainly be accepted to the Salvation of our Souls. So that in truth, if Men were but Faithful to themſelves, Sincere before God, and careful to prevent the Miſchievous influence of Sin: the Difficulties they meet with from the Depravity of Nature alone, would be but ſmall and Inconſiderable, in compariſon of what they bring upon themſelves by their own neglect. The inclinations to Evil, that are moſt Impetuous, and Violent, and give Men the greateſt trouble: are not

Conquered by ſupplies of Grace.

not Natural, but acquired; not implanted in us, but Contracted by us; by bad Cuſtoms, and by Vicious Habits. This is ſo Evident that it wants no Proof. But if it did, we have the fatal Evidence of experience. For thoſe Perſons who have long accuſtomed themſelves to do Good; find none of theſe unſupportable difficulties in Religion, and yet they are Men, and made of the ſame Frame with other Men. They are ſubject to the like Inclinations, and Paſſions with their Brethren; But only, the Appetites that are truly Natural, are not Violent; and therefore it is no burden to reſtrain them. 'Tis Indulging Vicious Inclinations, and Pampering Luſts, and *making Proviſion for the Fleſh*; that make our bad Affections vigorous, and ungovernable; and Religion Irkſome and Unpleaſant. And this is no farther Natural, than as Cuſtom may be called Nature.

And this cannot make it an unreaſonable thing for them to Mortifie their Luſts: becauſe however difficult it may be thought, the difficulty is owing to themſelves. If

Men

Men will play with Vipers, and take a Snake into their Boſom, they muſt blame themſelves, if they happen to be Stung, or bitten by it. Or if afterwards the Cure proves Sharp, and Grievous: 'tis highly unjuſt to complain of the unkindneſs of the Phyſician; when the Malady will not admit of gentle Remedies. So, if Men will give up the Reins, and ſuffer their Headſtrong Appetites to range without reſtraint; they will, they muſt find Religion the leſs eaſy, and the leſs pleaſing. But this is not owing to the Severity of God, and the unreaſonableneſs of his Laws: but to their own own Licentiouſneſs, and Indulgence. And though to mortify and ſubdue ſuch Luſts may be difficult; yet it cannot be unreaſonable. Eſpecially if we conſider and add,

3. That whatever difficulty and unpleaſantneſs there may be in Mortifying theſe Luſts: yet the Miſery and Torments that theſe will bring upon us: are infinitely greater than the trouble we meet with in ſubduing them. Nothing can be unreaſonable that is Manifeſtly for a Man's Good

The miſerable conſequence of indulging them.

Good, and Benefit. Now whoever conſiders the Future State, as a State in which God decrees to Reward and Puniſh the Actions of Men; and reflects upon the account given in the Goſpel, of the Torments of the Wicked; cannot doubt but that the Puniſhment of Sin, in the other World, ſhall far exceed the Pleaſures and Advantages of it in this. It cannot therefore be unreaſonable to Deny our ſelves, and reſtrain our Looſe Deſires, however it may be thought ſevere. Had not any *Man better cut off his right Hand; and pluck out his right Eye*, though this is very Grievous; *rather than have two Hands or two Eyes to be caſt into Hell Fire?* Had not any Man better forbear the Pleaſures of Sin for a Seaſon, however charming they may appear: than for the tranſient pleaſures ſake, *to dwell in everlaſting burnings?* Had not any Man better undergo ſome Trouble, and Uneaſineſs, in a conflict with his Corrupt Affections; and ſubdue them with Faſting, and Prayer, and ſuch like Religious Auſterities: than to bear the pungent Sting they carry behind them *here*, and in the *World to come*,

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the Worm that never dies, and the *Fire that ſhall never be quenched?* There are a great many common remedies and uſual methods of Cure to bodily Diſtempers that are more terrible, and much more Grievous than any ordinary Duties of Religion; and yet when Life, a very Brittle, and Uncertain Life, is at Stake, and the Violence of the Diſtemper makes ſuch Remedies neceſſary: Men judge it better to ſubmit to them than to Die. Much more does the aſſurance of an Endleſs and Eternal Life; make it Juſt and Reaſonable to ſubmit to hardſhips which are leſs ſevere.

Suppoſe then that there were more truth in this Objection, then there really is; that the Irkſomneſs of Mortification, and Self-denial proceeded wholly from God, and not from our ſelves. Then indeed we might think God leſs Merciful, and more Rigorous than now we can: Yet even then it were not Unreaſonable to comply with them; It were our trueſt Wiſdom, carefully to obſerve theſe Duties; becauſe the effects of our Luſts are infinitely more Grievous, and more Intollerable,

than any Hardſhips in a Conflict with them. So that upon a fair Determination, there can be found nothing Unreaſonable in Self-Denial, and Mortification. But,

God's Clemency in accepting an Imperfect Obedience.

4. Laſtly, I would obſerve alſo as a farther Inſtance of the Goodneſs of God and the Reaſonableneſs of Religion; that as we labour under ſome Infirmities and Indiſpoſitions, ſo he Mercifully accepts from us very Weak, and Imperfect Service. Were an abſolute Perfection in Holineſs, the Rigorous condition of our Everlaſting Happineſs: then indeed ours were Melancholly Circumſtances, and there were juſt Cauſe, if not of Complaint, yet at leaſt of Lamentation, for then we ſhould be in a deplorable and deſperate condition, through our total incapacity to do what is neceſſary to our Peace, and by that total incapacity we ſhould be without Hope. But through the Mercy of our Good God, our Caſe is otherwiſe. Our Infirmities have found pity, and an Imperfect Obedience, if it be ſincere ſhall be accepted, and Rewarded with Eternal Bliſs and Glory.

What

What is it then that Men complain of? Would they have the Felicities of an Heavenly State Meanly, and Baſely proſtituted to the Sloathful and the Vicious? Or to be attained without either Care or Concernment, as though it were a ſmall thing, and not worthy of our Sollicitude and Induſtry? This ſure is not for the Honour of God, nor agreeable to the Excellency of the recompence that is ſet before us. And if there be no more Difficulty in Religion it ſelf, then what becomes the Excellency of that Glory with which we ſhall be rewarded; nor more than what reaſonable circumſpection and care may overcome: what is the Hardſhip and Grievance of which Men complain?

They may I confeſs increaſe the difficulty by indulging their Corruptions, and pampering their Luſts, till theſe ſhall gain the Aſcendant over them and become almoſt inconquerable: But this is owing to themſelves; and the fruits of their own Indiſcretion and Naughtineſs; and though its a mighty Hardſhip to break thro' the Power of ſuch Unreſtrained In-

clinations: yet the Complaint lies not againſt Religion, but againſt the Raſhneſs and Negligence, and Wilfull Naughtineſs of Men. Theſe are the Miſchievous effects of Iniquity, that might eaſily have been prevented by a Pious and an Early Care. This therefore will be ſo far from being thought a Juſt Apology or Excuſe of Men's Irreligion: that it will be the great Aggravation of their Guilt, and increaſe their Condemnation; that they have in compliance to the corruption of their Appetites been Wicked and run into all the Drudgery and Slavery of Sin: when they might with greater Eaſe, and leſs Hardſhips have attained the Eternal Salvation of their Souls.

Suffering Perſecution not unreaſonable.

2. The other great Objection is, that Chriſtians are obliged to take up the Croſs and ſuffer Perſecution for Religion when called to it. But this is an extraordinary Caſe, that but ſeldom happens; and thoſe who except againſt it are but rarely tried by it. And when this does happen, what is it; or why is it unreaſonable? 'Tis but paying our Redeemer a Debt we owe him. The giving up

up a Life at a Stake or a Gibbet, for him that once dyed on the Croſs for us. 'Tis, I confeſs, a ſevere trial to Fleſh and Blood; but if we conſult our Reaſon, it is in no wiſe Unbecoming or Unworthy of us.

For what is the Life we ſo dread to Loſe? very deſirable indeed, but very uncertain. A Bleſſing we our ſelves are not the Maſters of. The worſt Enemy we have may take it from us. Nay, a very little Accident, a Grape-ſtone, or a Fly, may as effectually deſtroy us, as a Thunderbolt. And where is the ſeverity of giving up to God that Life, of which he is in truth the ſole Proprietor, and which we hold only of his *Grace* and *Favour?* And why ſhould we refuſe to make an Offering of that to day; which if we be let alone, we know not that we can keep to morrow?

But value Life as highly as you will; yet 'tis what we think commendable to hazard for our Country; and if we fall in that Service, we are ſaid to lie in the Bed of Honour. And does not our Religion, in which God, and our Souls, and

our Eternal Welfare in Heaven are concerned, deſerve as well of us as the little Part of this lower World, in which we can have no long abiding place? Nay the Life we prize ſo dear, is often thrown away for a Friend, and to be ſecond in his Quarrel; is often ſacrificed to our Malice, and loſt in the avenging ſome petty, and deſpicable Injury. And how is it unreaſonable to offer to God by Martyrdom that Life, which Men who pretend to Reaſon as much as any, throw away upon ſmall and trivial Accounts?

I grant again, that this is Severe, and Sharp. Axes and Gibbets are very terrible to Fleſh and Blood. But then there is this for our Comfort, that as God but very rarely calls Men to this Trial; So when he does, he ſupports them with extraordinary Strength, and Courage by his Miraculous Aſſiſtance from above; and, when the Suffering Scene is over crowns them with Brighter and more Glorious Diadems, than other Men. So that indeed, 'tis but changing a troubleſome World a little ſooner, and in a more terrible Man-

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ner, for perfect Felicity; and such an exalted Degree of Celestial Glory; as will sufficiently Vindicate what we do to be both Reasonable and Wise.

And if this, the Severest of all Duties be not unreasonable, I think nothing in our Religion can be so. Proceed we therefore,

3. Lastly, To consider if the Reasonableness of the Duties of Religion be not a forceable, and obliging Motive to a strict Observance of them, and that upon these Accounts.

1. That it renders the Vices and Iniquities of Wicked Men inexcusable. I can easily consent, that if there was any considerable Force in this Objection; any very great Hardships in the ordinary Practice of Religion: it were not unreasonable to expect, that a Gracious God would make allowances to the Difficulties under which we Labour, and not punish the Impieties of Men with that Rigour, and Severity as is pretended. But our Condition is quite otherwise. Infirmities indeed we have, that make a Perfection of Holiness impossible to us; but in tenderness to this, God graciously ad- *Impenitent Sinners inexcusable.*

mits of Repentance, and requires no more from us then what is in our Power by the help of his Grace to Accompliſh. And nothing of this, can be either very Difficult or very Grievous. All the conſiderable Hardſhip which there is in any Thing, that depends upon our Will, and Choice: proceeds wholly from its thwarting the Laws of our Nature, and the Principles of our Being. But is there any Thing of this Kind in the Laws of the Goſpel? Have we not ſeen every thing founded upon Good Reaſons; becoming the Relation we bear to God, and to each other; and conducing much to the Good of Mankind? Where then is the Hardſhip of ſuch a Religion as this?

Ariſtot. Cicero, Seneca, M. Antonin.

Did not even the Heathens by the Light of Nature; by an Apprehenſion of the Goodneſs, and Advantage, and the Agreeableneſs of them to Mankind; did they not I ſay, from theſe Principles Teach, and Recommend moſt of theſe Virtues, and Duties, long before the Goſpel was ever heard of? And would certainly have taught them more perfectly

fectly then they did; had not their Underſtandings been impaired, by their Ignorance of the True God; and the Follies that Idolatry, and Superſtition brought into the World. Who can then but ſtand amazed, to hear Men inveigh againſt the Laws, and Precepts of the Goſpel; as Harſh, and Slaviſh, and Severe? If they be ſo, how came all Mankind; when left to the Conduct of their own Reaſon: ſo Unanimouſly to Approve, and Commend, the ſame things, tho' not in ſo great Perfection?

If it be an Unreaſonable thing to be Temperate and Sober, Juſt and Peaceable; Why did the Great Maſters of Philoſophy perſwade theſe Things? Why did they call them Virtues, and Means of Happineſs and Quiet? And why have they ſaid ſo many fine Things in the Praiſe and Commendation of them? And why did they, as many of them are reported to have done: even Live to the Recommendation of them too? Why did they not rather inſtruct the World in the Principles of Senſuality and Debauchery; of Rapine and In-

Iniquity? Why? the Laws of their Minds taught them better; and the Dictates of Reaſon would not admit Senſuality to bear Sway. They were firmly convinced of the Excellency of Virtue, and could not recede from Things ſo agreeable to their Nature, ſo much conducing to the Good, and Benefit of Men.

If then the Virtue, and Duties of Religion, even from the mere Light of Nature, appeared thus Reaſonable; where is the Hardſhip, where the Severity of them? No Duty I ſay again can be irkſome but what is much againſt the Principles of our Nature. Now what Faculties of our Nature do the Precepts of the Goſpel thwart? Not our Reaſon you ſee, not our Underſtandings; not the Laws of our Minds; It can then only be the Paſſions, and Affections, and Inclinations of the Fleſh.

And indeed this is the only Quarrel againſt it. God is repreſented as a Severe Task-Maſter, and Religion decryed as unreaſonable, and an unpleaſant Thing; becauſe it reſtrains Mens Paſſions, and their Luſts. It com-

commands them not to Degenerate into Bruits; but to govern their Appetites, and Inclinations by Wiſdom and Diſcretion. It does not leave them at Liberty to throw off their Reaſon, and give themſelves up entirely to the Conduct of their Vile Affections. This is all the Unreaſonableneſs; and this is all the Severity in it; And is this ſo juſt a Matter of Complaint? Would Men have the ineſtimable Reward of a Bleſſed Immortality in Heaven, purchaſed without any Labor, any Pains? would they have Cæleſtial Crowns, and Diadems of Glory to be worn by every Lazy Head, without any Trouble? Or to be the recompence of Luſt, and Vice, and Naughtineſs? Where is the Reaſonableneſs of this?

But I have ſpoke to this Matter already, I have ſhewn that we have a Law of our Minds giving check to the diſorderly Motions of our Appetites; and which it is infinitely more troubleſome and grievous to Violate and Stifle; than to withſtand any Luſt whatever. I have ſhewn that our Affections, unleſs we have ſuffered them to get the entire

tire Maſtery over us, will give us no mighty Vexation. If we reſtrain them we are rid of their Importunity; and have abundance of Satisfaction and Comfort in ſo doing. But if we offer Violence to our Conſcience: it frets, and galls our Spirit; affects us with Shame and Anguiſh, and that not only for the preſent; but it may be every day we live.

Had then the contrary to what is now our Duty been commanded, would there have been no Complaints made? I am ſure there had been much juſter Cauſe, The Convictions of Conſcience would not have been ſuppreſſed with ſo much Eaſe, as Luſts, and vicious Appetites may. Then Duty had indeed been againſt the Laws of our Nature, and the Dictates of Reaſon, and the Principles of our very Being. But now, Religion cannot be a mighty grievance to any, but to thoſe only who ſurrender themſelves up to divers Luſts; and make ſenſual Pleaſures the chief End and Buſineſs of their Life. And if it be ſo to thoſe, who muſt bear the Blame? not God, nor his Religion ſure, but themſelves. 'Tis

'Tis they, not he, has made it ſo. The Laws are Juſt, and Equal; the Duties Reaſonable, and the Commandments Holy, Wiſe, and Good.

And what can be a juſter Motive to a ſincere Obedience, then after we have reflected upon the Sovereign Authority, and incontroulable Power of our Great Creatour and Governour: to conſider the Juſtice of his Laws, and the Reaſonableneſs of all his Commands? For whilſt the former Conſideration teaches us that Religion is Neceſſary: this ſhews us that it is no Burden. Whilſt Power terrifies, Reaſon convinces us. The one conſtrains, the other Reconciles us to our Duty. And as the one Frights, the other Perſuades us to Obedience. And how can Men reject the Laws and Precepts of that Glorious God: in whom Greatneſs and Goodneſs ſhine with equal Luſtre. But

2. The Reaſonableneſs of the Duties of Religion is a farther Motive, as it Vindicates the Juſtice of God in the Puniſhment of Sinners; Our Righteous Judge will certainly judge righteouſly, and admit of any reaſonable Plea. But what can a Wicked

God's Juſtice in their Condemnation.

ed Chriſtian alledge in his own Behalf, or Complain of, and Charge the Juſtice of God upon? Will he argue the Severity of God's Laws? His own Conſcience will give Evidence againſt him. Will he plead the Power of his Luſts, and Appetites, that have been his Hindrance? This was chiefly through his Folly, and Imprudence. And how will that be his Excuſe, which is rather an Aggravation of his Crime?

Beſides as a Manifeſtation of the Wonderful and Undeſerved Goodneſs of God, he has given us an Effectual Remedy againſt this Evil. The Bountiful tenders of his Grace, and the Bleſſed Aſſiſtances of his Holy Spirit from above; to *work in us, both to Will, and to Do what is Good*; So that it is the greateſt Inſtance of our Perverſeneſs, and the greateſt enhancement of our Guilt: that we Chriſtians by Indulging our Luſts, and giving up the Reins of our Vile Affections, loſe our Strength, and become like common Men.

What then ſhall become of the Wicked Chriſtian who can no where find any Excuſe; no not ſo much as to

to extenuate his Offences, or mitigate the Sentence to be pronounced againſt his Wickedneſs? Into what an horrid Confuſion, and Conſternation, muſt it put the Soul of Man: when he finds that the Wrath of God is juſtly kindled againſt him; and he has not one reaſonable thing to urge, to move his Compaſſion to him? What has he then to do, but to throw himſelf at God's Feet, and rely upon his Mercy? But alas Man! what room for Mercy, when thy Repentance comes too late? Hadſt thou reflected on thy Folly ſooner; hadſt thou been more early Wiſe; hadſt thou relented whilſt the Day of Grace laſted; there had been hope; and there had been Salvation for thee.

But then the Gratifying Vicious Luſts, and Appetites; and the Pleaſures of Sin were too valuable, too dear to be forgone. And now, the Sting, and the Anguiſh that attends them, is found intolerable, and yet cannot be avoided. Then, the Laws of the Goſpel were thought too harſh; and now that the Juſtice of them appears, there is no place of Repentance left; and yet the Puniſhment

niſhment to be inflicted is ſo very Righteous: that there is no hope, that it ſhall ever be remitted. And therefore,

Vengeance reaſonably to be expected.

3. Laſtly, This is another moving Conſideration: that as the reaſonableneſs of our Duty makes Mans Puniſhment very Juſt; from hence it becomes the more Reaſonable to expect, and believe, and depend upon it that this will once be the Caſe of all Wicked Men.

The Belief of a future State of Rewards and Puniſhments is grounded on our Apprehenſions of the Juſtice of God; which ſeems concern'd to diſtinguiſh between Good and Bad Men; and conſequently, not to let the Wicked go unpuniſhed. And, if this be ſo; then the more Reaſonable our Duty is; the more God ſeems concerned to Puniſh the Tranſgreſſions of it. It cannot be ſuppoſed that a Juſt, and Holy God, will ſuffer his Authority to be Affronted, and the violation of Laws ſo Juſt, and ſo agreeable to our Nature, wholly to eſcape. 'Tis a Rational Thing to Expect, and Fear that God will puniſh the Wickedneſs,

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and Impieties of Men; in that there is so much Wisdom, and Goodness, and Reason, in all the Duties that are commanded.

And then one would think it a Wise thing to provide for that which we have so much reason to expect. For why should Men so foolishly *treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of Wrath, and Revelation of the Righteous Judgments of God:* who will certainly vindicate the contempt of his Holy Laws? Why will Men make themselves Miserable, when they may be happy? Miserable they must be if they be Wicked; Gods Justice is concern'd that they shoud suffer.

He pities the Miserable 'tis true, and had rather Men should Repent and be saved. But if they continue obstinate, and perverse: his Wisdom will set bounds to his Compassion, that his Holiness, and abhorrence of Vice, as well as his Mercy may appear. That by the Misery of the Sinner he may confirm his Detestation of the Sin, and Evidence his Indignation to be Real, and Serious; not Dissembled, no Pretence, no Counterfeit.

So that if Wicked Men were not the moſt Raſh, Inconſiderate, Unthinking of all intelligent Creatures; if they would but open their Eyes, and reflect upon their Condition: they are Surrounded with Terrors on every ſide. Every Thing, every Thought; the Power and the Juſtice of God; the Equity of his Laws, and the Baſeneſs of their own Actions: do all ſhew how certainly Miſery will be the State of thoſe who will be Wicked. What then have Impenitent Sinners to do, but either to ſit down, and prepare for the Miſery they have choſen; and conſult how they may beſt be able to Endure the Torments they would not be perſwaded to avoid; or elſe with earneſt Application and endeavour to return unto their God? For however Dreadful and Aſtoniſhing the Approach of that terrible Day ſhall be: Men cannot pretend to be Surpriſed; in that beſides the warning given them by the Word of God, and the Miniſters of the Goſpel: in the excellency of Religion they may ſee the Juſtice of Divine Vengeance; and in the Reaſonableneſs of all its Duties;

read

read the certainty, and neceſſity of their own eternal Condemnation.

CHAP IV.

The Advantages of Religion to the Happineſs of this Life.

HAving already given ſome Account of the Truth and Certainty of the firſt Principles of Religion, and of the Reaſonableneſs of its Duties: both which are obliging Conſiderations to make Men Serious and Hearty in it; I ſhall now endeavour to confirm and ſtrengthen the Force of theſe Motives, by a farther View of the Advantages that attend it, and upon which it appears to be not only our Duty, to live in the zealous Practice of it: but a wiſe Thing in point of Intereſt, and in the perſuit of true and ſolid Happineſs. And here we find its Greateſt Excellency and moſt Glorious Character; in the Contemplation of which we cannot but abundantly Rejoyce, and moſt *Affectionately* recommend it, *viz.*

that it is attended with both Preſent and Future Comforts; and ſecures the Choiceſt and moſt valuable Felicities of this Life, as well as thoſe which we look for hereafter.

This is a certain Truth, however it is by the Generality of Mankind hardly received; and look'd on as too great a Paradox. I am ſenſible one of the great Diſadvantages that Religion lies under, is that it is accounted a Check to the Joys and Delights of this Life; whether the Rewards it promiſes; and the Bliſs to which it invites us: are at too great a Diſtance; and to be expected in another State; that we know but little of; and often doubt whether it ſhall be or no. And that in the perſuit of this Diſtant, and as Men often call it, Uncertain Felicity: they muſt forego their Intereſts, and Deny their Pleaſures; and abjure the Delights and Comforts that are every Day before them. And if they can but once perſuade themſelves that this is a real Truth; they ſoon bid adieu to all ſerious Proſecution of it; eagerly perſue the Preſent Happineſs of this lower World: rather

ther than loſe all for future, diſtant, and doubtful Expectation, And they call this their Wiſdom, and Applaud their Choice.

But as I have already prov'd, that we have ſufficient Reaſon to Believe and reſt Aſſured that there will be ſuch a Future State and Judgment as we live in expectation of; So I hope now to make it out, notwithſtanding all theſe fine Plauſible and Specious Pretences that the Religious Mans Reward is not only in Reverſion; but that he is in this Life generally Speaking more Happy than the Wicked, as well as in that which is to come. To clear this Point I would offer theſe few Things to ſerious Conſideration.

I. That God in his Original Purpoſe and Intention did without all queſtion make Mankind to be happy here on Earth.

II. That as this Happineſs was firſt loſt by Sin, ſo every Vice, and every great Tranſgreſſion is inevitably deſtructive of the Felicity of Mankind.

III. That tho ſince Sin entred into the World there are many Wiſe and Good Reaſons why the Good Mans Happineſs is not now complete: yet ſtill Religion and Virtue do very much contribute to the Peace and Quiet and true Comfort of Humane Life; and to prevent the moſt conſiderable Afflictions. And after I have gone thro theſe.

IV. Laſtly, I ſhall conſider one plauſible objection that ſeems to be made againſt all this, from the Frequent Tribulations of Good Men, and in the Anſwer to that, I ſhall have Occaſion to ſet forth, what are the Real and Great Advantages in this Life; that make it notwithſtanding all this Objection, to be Wiſdom as well as Duty to be Religious.

God deſigned Man to be happy upon Earth.

1. That God in his Original Purpoſe and Intention did without all queſtion make Mankind to be Happy here on Earth. And conſequently that they firſt loſt and deſtroyed this their Bleſſing, by their own Offences and Defaults. And that this is in Truth the Caſe will appear.

1. From

1. From the Condition in which God Originally placed Mankind. It was in a Bleſſed State of all ſuch perfect Felicity and Joy, as the noble Nature of ſuch a Creature was capable, and would well admit of: and exempt from all Sorrows and Tribulation. Man had then a Sound and Quiet Mind; an Eaſy and Healthful Body; with abundant Plenty of all Things richly to enjoy. He had then no Vicious Appetites to Thwart, and to Struggle and Combat with the Good Dictates and Inclinations of his Soul: But all his Deſires were Regular, and Uniform, and Wiſe, and Good. And what the Heart choſe, and the Will approv'd, their well Inſtructed, Unerring Conſcience reommended; that their pure Affections perſued, and proſecuted, and took Delight in. He had then no impure Thoughts, no Corrupt Deſigns, no Headſtrong and Unruly Paſſions to Diſtract, and Ruffle, and Diſcompoſe his Mind: but as all his Purpoſes were Good and Wiſe, ſo in the Innocence and Wiſdom of them he had great Tranquility, Complacency and Joy.

He had then no Sickneſs, no Pains, no Sores; No Gout, no Dropſy, no Feavours: But as his Wiſe Creator had Inſtituted and Ordained; the Body that was Serviceable and an Inſtrument to the Actions of Life: in the Sound Order and Hail Conſtitution of it, became alſo an Inſtrument of his Pure Delights, and added to his Comfort and Satisfaction. He had then no Fears to terrify him; no Cares to Vex him; no Wants to Grieve him; no Hardſhips to Complain of; no Labour to Perplex him; no Misfortunes to Afflict him; no Sorrows to Lament. He had neither Poverty, nor Shame, nor Diſtreſs, nor Tribulation; nor Death. None to Oppreſs him, no Loſs of Childdren or Relations to Bemoan. But inſtead of Troubles and Vexations, his Life was a Life of Religion, and Devotion, and Holineſs; and he was deſigned wholly to the Enjoyment of that Peace, and Comfort, and Perfect Conſolation; that naturally ſpring from them. In a Word, he had a complete Knowledge of what was Good, and Conducive to his Happineſs; and what he thus knew,

knew, he Loved, he Deſired, he Proſecuted, he Attain'd, he Approved, he Rejoyced in; without either Diſappointment or Repentance.

And as this was the Bleſſed and Happy Condition of Man in his firſt State; ſo in that alone we have ſufficient Diſcoveries of the Goodneſs of God to us, and of the Greatneſs of his Love. And we cannot but from thence conclude, that he has no Pleaſure in the Calamities and Tribulations of Mankind: which he has approved himſelf ſo Careful and Solicitous to prevent. He does not Willingly Grieve and Afflict the Children of Men: but all the Sorrows that proceed from him; are Wiſely choſen and well Ordained, and proceed in ſome Senſe or other, from the Sins, and Tranſgreſſions of Mankind. As will be more Evident

2. From the continuance of this Bleſſed and Happy State. And here I do not undertake to ſhew, how long it was from Man's firſt Creation to his Fall; nor to number out how many Days, or Months, or Years it was that he poſſeſt this Perfection

Man's Happineſs firſt loſt by Sin.

fection of Felicity; for ſuch Curioſities have I think neither Certainty nor Benefit. It's enough to our preſent Purpoſe to take Notice; that be it longer or ſhorter, all this was certainly preſerved as long as Man abſtained from doing Evil. He was created in Righteouſneſs as well as Happineſs; and the Continuance and Enſuring of the one: was to be the reward of his Care and Piety in the Preſervation of the Other, ſo that ſo long as he continued Innocent, ſo long he continued Bleſſed, and Happy alſo; nor did Affliction and Sorrow ever invade him, till, his own Diſobedience made the Way for them.

When forgetful of his Duty and of God's Command, he committed Sin: then the Door was open, and the Curſe of God came upon him; and the Sentence of Death; and Miſery was pronounced againſt him. Then the Conſciouſneſs of his Guilt brought upon him Shame, and Fear, and Anguiſh; Then he Trembles; and Grieves, and hides himſelf from the Preſence of his offended God: and the Pleaſure of the Lord towards him

him was turned into Vengeance, and inſtead of Bleſſings and Protection in the Completion of his Felicities: he was Abandoned to Afflictions and Sorrows, and great Tribulations. Then the Earth no longer brought forth its Fruits without Culture, but call'd for Tillage with Induſtrious Labor, and great Fatigue: and Man is doom'd to get his Bread and Subſiſtence, with Sweat, and Toil, and anxious Pains. Then the Woman is condemned to Sorrow: and in both Sexes, Calamities and Afflictions are entailed upon all their Generation. Then Pale Death entred into the World with a numerous Train of Troubleſome Diſeaſes, and Caſualties, and Frightful Ghaſtly Terrors; And having once found a Place among us: it ſoon quickened its ſlow Pace and enlarged its Dominion, and made the Days of Mankind upon Earth both *few and full of Miſery.*

Thus it was that Man firſt loſt his Happineſs; not by foregoing his Pleaſures in the Service of his God: for in that was his greateſt Delight, and moſt ſolid Conſolation. Not in any

and ſome to that, and Multitudes of Mankind periſh by the ſad Diſaſters of their Wickedneſs and Folly.

I confeſs indeed there would be Sickneſs and Men would die; tho all were Zealouſly Religious. But I appeal to all Mankind whether there would not be fewer Sick, and many Live much longer? Whether Mans Life would not be more Healthful, and Death Advance more ſlowly? How many are there in the World who Languiſh under Aches and Pains; are tormented with feeble Limbs and Rotten Bones that make Life it ſelf a Burden: whoſe own Conſciences bear them Witneſs, that if they had been more Innocent they might have been more Sound? How often do we find Men of ſtrong Conſtitutions and firm Contextures Wither and Die; not by the gradual Decays of Age, but Blaſted and Conſumed in the very Prime of Youth by vaſt Intemperance. And is not Religion then much for the Good and Benefit of Men? And does it not mightily contribute to the Happineſs of Life; which in this one Reſpect alone, would prevent ſo many and

ſo

ſo grievous Miſeries. But again,

3. Another Thing that afflicts Mankind is Diſgrace and an ill Reputation. Now all things that Chriſtianity Commands are of Good Report, and nothing in Nature contributes more to the firm Eſtabliſhment of a Good Name, then the being ſtrictly ſincere in it. No Man ever did a Reproachful and Scandalous Thing, but for want of Prudence, or of Piety. And he is of all Men moſt likely to be in no diſgrace; who has done nothing to deſerve it. Malice I confeſs may blacken the faireſt Character, and Ill-Nature throw Dirt upon the Whiteſt Robes, but it muſt be Helliſh Malice and the worſt of Ill-Nature that will do this. Innocence and Virtue have ſo much Beauty, and ſuch Illuſtrious Charms; that generally they gain the Admiration and Eſteem of Men; attract their Eyes and Love, and make them Praiſe even when they will not Practiſe them. *Diſgrace.*

4. *Laſtly*, The next great Calamity of Humane Life is Poverty; and extream Poverty is indeed a Real and Mighty Miſery. But then how great *Poverty.*

great a Share of this ſore afflicting Evil do Men bring upon themſelves? I do not mean only by the Judgments of God's Providence, which their Sins have provoked him to ſend down upon them to Chaſtiſe their Naughtineſs, I ſpeak now of the Natural, and Neceſſary Effects of their Debauchery. How many Poor Men are there of their own making? One Man throws away a fair Fortune by the caſt of a Die, and the Eſtate which was gathered by ſlow Degrees thro the Conſtant Care and hard Labour of the Father: the Prodigal Son ſinks in a Moment, and it can never be recovered again. Another perhaps moves more ſlowly, but arrives as ſurely, at the ſame height of Miſery, by conſuming his Eſtate in Luxury, and Senſuality.

One Man Sacrifices all his Wealth to his Pride; and for the ſake of State and pompous Show in the former part of his Life: becomes concontemptibly Indigent in the latter. Another offers all to Pleaſures, and that he may enjoy the Days of his Youth in ſenſual Delights: is forced to Languiſh out the Dregs of Life,

in

in Mourning, and Sorrow, and ſad Repentance. Thus do Mankind frequently by their miſtaken Projects of Grandeur, and Pleaſure, and Happineſs; lay the Scene of their own certain Ruine. And like him who gazing upon the Stars tumbled into a Pit: by aſpiring to ſome ſingular Felicity above thoſe Men who live by Religion and by Rule; they make themſelves more wretchedly Forlorn.

Mans greateſt Miſery is from Sin.

Here therefore let us ſtand ſtill a little, and wonder at the ſtrange Unreaſonableneſs of thoſe, who make it an Objection againſt Divine Providence, that there are ſo many Calamities in the World, and ſo many Miſerable Men under God's Gracious Care. How Unreaſonable and Unjuſt an Objection is this, when ſo great a ſhare of the Miſerable, and I am apt to think much the greater of the Two: have ruin'd themſelves by their own Naughtineſs? How great a Number of thoſe who complain of their Unhappy Circumſtances, and call themſelves Unfortuuate: if the true Cauſe of their Misfortunes could be enquired into; would be found in no wiſe to deſerve ſo ſoft a Name?

And why must our Gracious God be charg'd with those Calamities; which are owing wholly to the Naughtiness and Wickedness of Men? And, when too, he has done all that became his Wisdom and Goodness, by strict Laws, and positive Commands; by severe Threatnings, and manifest Declarations of his Vengeance to hinder and Restrain them.

If Men will be Wicked why should they complain of God that they are Miserable? Luxury, and Intemperance, and Drunkenness, and Gluttony; Prodigal, and Riotous Living in unbounded sensual Pleasures will make Men Sick, and Scandalous, and Needy; will breed painful Diseases; sully Reputation, and bring them to Poverty and Want: tho there were no God, no Providence at all. It is rather a Demonstration of a Providence, and of the Goodness of it too; that there are not more Miseries; that there is so much Happiness in the World as is: seeing Men do so industriously Endeavour by their hateful Immoralities to destroy it.

Besides, many of those Calamities which proceed from the Providence of

of God, the Sins of Men Provoke his Juſtice to inflict upon them; either to Correct and Chaſtiſe their Naughtineſs, or elſe to Prevent it, by cutting off the Temptation to their Sins. It is indeed hard for us to know, when Mens Afflictions are ſent as Puniſhments, and when as Trials, and when to ſerve the Ends of Providence: becauſe we know not, and are not allowed to Judge of their Deſerts. But yet, no Man who believes a Providence can doubt, but that many Calamities are violently pull'd down upon Men's Heads by their own grievous Provocations. And conſequently, that there would be fewer Diſaſters, fewer Misfortunes, fewer Evils, and Afflictions ſent into the World by Almighty God: if there was leſs Impiety, and if Mens Sins were leſs Provoking.

I ſpeak not this to Reproach the Afflicted, or to charge any man, for his Calamities, with greater Guilt than other Men; Far be from me ſo ill a Thought. The beſt of us too much Deſerve God's Judgments; and it is owing to his Goodneſs that we do not feel them. All the Uſe

therefore that I make of this Conſideration is, to convince the Wicked; that Miſery and Deſtruction are before them, when they do not ſee it; but Dream of Great Felicity. All that I inſiſt on is, that which every Body knows, and muſt Confeſs; and it is an Aſtoniſhing Wonder that they do not more ſeriouſly lay it to Heart, *viz.* That the far greater ſhare of the Evils under which Men Labour and Mourn, are owing to their Sins; and might in a great Meaſure have been Prevented by Religion. But to proceed,

Religion does much promote our Happineſs

III. As Sin brings certain Tribulations, ſo on the other hand Religion and Holineſs contribute much to keep off the Miſeries that Grieve and Torment us; and have a Natural Tendency to procure thoſe Bleſſings that make Life Eaſy and Pleaſant. For what are they? Are they not theſe, Health, and a Good Name, and a proſperous Fortune, and an Eaſy Mind Reliſhing Enjoyments, and Reaping Contentment and Satisfaction from them? And which of all theſe is not much promoted by Religion?

1. As

1. As for Health I have ſaid enough already. If Riot, and Exceſs, and Intemperance overcharge Nature, breed Surfeits, Calentures, Rheumatiſms, Fevers and Conſumptions: Sobriety and Temperance muſt have a proportionable Influence to prevent theſe Calamities. But Prevention is not all; Theſe Virtues have a real Influence to the Eſtabliſhment of Health. As Exceſs Corrupts the Blood, and Impairs Nature: So Temperance ſupports and renews it; preſerves the Appetite; ſtrengthens the Digeſtion; Cures the Diſorders of the Blood and Spirits; and makes the Man Hail and Vigorous. And ſuch Virtues are preſcribed by our Phyſicians as well as by our Confeſſors. Natures Law teaches this Wiſdom, as well as our Religion, and recommends it upon the ſame Advantage, becauſe *Length of Days are on her Right-Hand*, and Health almoſt continually attends her.

2. If a Good Name and a Good Eſteem in the World be a Bleſſing, what is more likely to procure that, than Religion? Who is beloved like a Good Man? or who eſteemed like *Reputation.*

the Innocent? And how often does it happen, that Men valuable for their Quality, Parentage, Fortune, Learning, Wiſdom, Courage, and Conduct: loſe that Honour, and Eſteem, and Love, which any of theſe Laudable Qualities might gain them; by the baſe Ignoble Actions of a Vicious Life? So that what has any Man, who has but a tolerable Regard to his Credit and Eſteem, more neceſſarily incumbent on him; than to do no Evil? For nothing is truly Scandalous but what is Vicious. But,

Eſtate. 3. There is nothing, according to the Eſteem of the World, that contributes more to the Happineſs of our preſent Life, than a plentiful Eſtate and an ample Fortune. I do not now diſpute whether this Opinion be Juſt, or Unjuſt; I only beg leave to ask, what Methods or Means Men would apply themſelves to, the moſt certainly to Raiſe, or to Increaſe their Fortunes?

Induſtry. Suppoſe that a Man was Setting out into the World with a Deſire to Advance himſelf, and to improve that Eſtate he receiv'd of his Anceſ-

tors

tors by Inheritance. What would he do? or what Method would he take? He would certainly apply himſelf to ſome kind of Buſineſs, knowing that a Man may be beggar'd as Effectually by doing nothing, as by doing ill. And if ever he hoped to be Succeſsful in his Buſineſs he would alſo ſee it Neceſſary to be Careful and Diligent in it. *For the Hand of the Diligent maketh Rich, but the Sloathful ſhall be under Tribute,* and Slavery, and Poverty. Now Diligence is a Duty of Religion, which the Scripture Recommends as well as common Prudence. Prov. x. 4.

And does not he ſeem obliged alſo to take Care, that what he gets by Labour, he does not waſt Profuſely? Will he be Laviſh in his Expences? and Prodigal and Vain in his Disburſtments? Will not Wiſdom rather teach him to be Moderate and Frugal? So does Religion alſo. Nay which is yet more, thoſe Extravagant Immoralities which it forbids, are the Things that commonly Bankrupt Mens Fortunes, and ſink their Eſtates. For as it was in the Days of old when Sacrifices were in uſe; the *Frugality.*

true God was often content with one ſingle Lamb, or a pair of Pigeons; when Idols, and Falſe Gods had whole Hecatombs and vaſt Numbers of more valuable Victims ſlain before them: So it is in the Actions and Conditions of Men; what Nature and Religion require, what conduces to the real Comforts and Conveniencies of Life, are Moderate and Reaſonable. 'Tis Pride, and Luxury, and Vanity, and Vice that exhauſt the vaſteſt Sums. And every Man muſt deſpair of growing Rich, that will be Profuſe, and Laviſh, and Extravagant in his Pleaſures.

Juſtice. Once more yet, tho Juſtice and Honeſty ſeem to lay ſome reſtraint on Men: yet there is ſome regard to be had to theſe alſo; If it be but to give a Man a Good Name, and Reputation, and Credit. Again, if for nothing elſe, theſe are neceſſary to prevent a Multitude of Vexatious Quarrels, and Expenſive Suits at Law: The common Fate of the Fraudulent Man, and which that has undone many Thouſands.

God's Bleſſing. But above all, if a Man has any Senſe of God, and of his Goverment, he

he muſt find it neceſſary to gain his Favour, and procure his Bleſſing upon his Labours. For when all is done, *'Tis the Bleſſing of the Lord that maketh Rich*, and all Succeſs is from him, and all Endeavours are in Vain, that he ſhall ſet himſelf againſt. So that let Worldly Wealth have never ſo large a Share in Mens Opinions, and Eſteem; yet ſtill, 'tis Wiſdom to be Religious. God indeed may do what he pleaſes, and does ſometimes let the Wicked Proſper. But whether he will or no, depends entirely upon himſelf. And he ſo often does otherwiſe, that no Wiſe Man would run that Risk, or build his Fortunes on ſo unſtable a Foundation. The Wiſeſt, and the ſafeſt Way is by Diligence, Frugality, Virtue, Innocence, Honeſty, and the Fear of God. But

Prov. x. 22.

4. Religion alſo contributes much, if not all in all, to an Eaſy Mind Reliſhing Enjoyments, and reaping true Contentment, and ſolid Satisfaction from them. A Thing ſo very neceſſary, that ſome Philoſophers have plac'd all the Felicity of a Man in it; and affirm'd that this alone is Sufficient

Peace and Tranquility of Mind.

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cient to make us Happy, under any Hardſhips, any Torments. But we leave the *Stoics* to Maintain their own *Paradoxes*, and are not concern'd to defend them. Only thus far it is true; that a Troubled and Diſturbed Mind alone; whether from Conſciouſneſs of Guilt, or the Diſorder of unruly Paſſions may make us Miſerable, when nothing elſe afflicts us. What *Seneca* tells us of *Vatia*'s Country Houſe, the moſt pleaſant Seat of all *Italy*; is true of the moſt Proſperous and Flouriſhing State of Men. *Vidi in villâ hilari, & amænâ mæſtos.* Says he, *I ſaw in that moſt Chearful, Pleaſant Seat, ſome Sad, ſome Afflicted.* It is neither Place, nor Fortune that alone can exempt Men from Unhappineſs. We often ſee Nobles and Princes in Mourning Habit as well as other Men; and their Hearts may be ſo, when their Habits are not. We often ſee thoſe cloathed in Rags, and Deſtitute, not only of Equipage and Retinue, but almoſt of Food and Raiment, and Habitation: to be free from Care, and full of Joy, and Seaſoning the hardeſt Drudgery with Mirth. We find *Adam* even in Paradiſe

radiſe, where one would leaſt expect Affliction, retiring into the Coverts of the Garden thro Shame, and Fear, and Grief. And yet he wanted nothing but a Good Concience; he had no Loſs to trouble him, but that of his Innocence. Indeed that was enough, Paradiſe it ſelf cannot exempt him from Miſery, whoſe Mind is diſquieted with the Convictions of Guilt, diſorderly Paſſions, and a Senſe of the Evils he has done. All which plainly ſhows, how much Eaſe and Tranquility of Mind contribute to the Happineſs of Man. How much they do, not only to ſupport Men under their Croſſes and Afflictions: but even to Seaſon Proſperity, and to give a Reliſh to all Enjoyments in it. Whatever Wealth, or Honour, or Strength, or Beauty, or Fortune a Man may have, to talk of Felicity merely from Outward Things without Inward Peace; is juſt as if one ſhould talk of making up a Man, of Body, Habit, and Eſtate, without a Soul. A Peaceable, Quiet, and Contented Mind, is the Soul and Life of all our Happineſs.

Here then is the ſingular Advantage of Religion. For of what elſe can
a Prov. iii. 17. it be truly ſaid, that *Her Ways are Ways of Pleaſantneſs, and all her Paths are Peace?* What elſe is it that can ſo certainly, and effectually make our Minds Eaſy and Calm? Whence come all the Severeſt Troubles and Diſſatisfactions, and Uneaſineſs, but from the Convictions of Conſcience, and Diſorderly Affections; Ambition, Pride, Covetouſneſs, Malice, and Fear? And what can cure the Perturbations of our Souls, but Innocence and Virtue? *Adam*'s Great Affliction was the Senſe of his Guilt; and who ſo ſecure of being free from the Anguiſh of an Evil Conſcience: as he that is always careful to keep a Good one? *Ahabs* Miſery aroſe from Covetouſneſs and an impatient Deſire of *Naboth*'s Vineyard; and how can a Man cure Covetouſneſs: but by learning to be *content with ſuch Things as he has?*

So alſo as to Ambition, Pride, Impatience, Malice, or Fear; who is leſs apt to Fear than he that has done no Evil? How can he ever be diſ-

diſquieted with Malice, or an eager Thirſt of Revenge, that has learnt to forgive Injuries and love Enemies? How is it poſſible for that Man to fret his Soul with Impatience, who loves not the World, nor ſets his Affections extravagantly upon any Thing in it? Nor can the Diſorders of Envy, Ambition, or Pride ever diſturb or ruffle the Soul of that Good Man; *who minds not high Things*; but is Meek and Lowly in Heart. So that the Duties and Virtues which our Religion teaches; do ſo effectually tend to Cure, and Prevent all Violent Paſſions and Perturbations: that it is morally Impoſſible, but that a very Good Man, in the Habitual Temper of his Soul, ſhould always enjoy himſelf, and be Eaſy, Serene and Calm.

And Peace and Tranquility of Mind go ſo far to our preſent Felicity; that any Condition almoſt may be happy with it; but none, however ſtor'd with Outward Things, can be tolerably Happy or Pleaſant without it. But,

5. *Laſtly*, It may not be amiſs to mention here ſome of thoſe Remarkable *The Bleſſings promiſed in Scripture*

ble Promiſes of Bleſſing and Proſperity that God has made to Good Men, for their Encouragement, in the Faithful Diſcharge of their Duties to him. Which at leaſt cannot but Import, that, beſides the Natural Influence of Religion, God will be Gracious and Favourable to us, in the Administrations of his Providence. Such

Pſ. 37. 3. are theſe. *Truſt in the Lord and do Good, ſo ſhalt thou dwell in the Land,*

22. *and verily thou ſhalt be fed. Such as are Bleſſed of God ſhall poſſeſs the Land, and they that are Curſed of him ſhall be*

Pſ. 1. 2, 3. *rooted out. Bleſſed is the Man whoſe Delight is in the Law of the Lord, he ſhall be like a Tree planted by the Water ſide, that will bring forth his Fruit in due Seaſon. His Leaf alſo ſhall not Wither, and look whotſoever he doth,*

Mat. 6. 33. *it ſhall proſper. Seek the Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs: and all theſe Things ſhall be added unto you.*

Rom. 8. 32. *He that ſpared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us: how ſhall not he alſo with him, freely give us all*

1 Tim. 4. 8. *Things. And Godlineſs is profitable for all things, having the Promiſe of this Life, and of that which is to come.*

But againſt the validity of this, ſome Ex-

Exceptions have been made, which will be proper here to be examined. And theſe indeed make up that Objection which I propoſed as the,

IV. Thing to be conſidered; *viz.* That which is brought from the known Afflictions and Tribulations of many Good Men, and the viſible Succeſſes and Proſperity of the Wicked. For, ſay ſome, what is the Security, or where are the Conſolations of all thoſe Declarations: when, notwithſtanding all the Promiſes on one ſide, many Good Men are in great Tribulations; and for all the Threats of Vengeance on the other, many Wicked Men Flouriſh and Proſper, and live in Pleaſure, and have no viſible Evils befall them like other Men. *The Afflictions of Good Men conſider'd.*

To this I anſwer. 1. That conſidering the preſent Circumſtances of Mankind ſince Sin entred into the World: there is no reaſon to expect a Perfection of Felicity, and a total Exemption from all manner of Tribulations. Nay there are ſeveral Good Reaſons to the contrary, as particularly,

1. Be-

No Perfection here while we are in a State of Sin.

1. Becauſe no Mans Goodneſs is abſolutely Perfect and Complete. For in that State in which there is an Univerſal Mixture of Sin, and Guilt: there muſt of Neceſſity be an Univerſal Mixture of Vexation and Trouble. Theſe are not only Juſt and Reaſonable, as the Rewards of Iniquity, but they are alſo Wiſe and Beneficial in the Way of Diſcipline, to Prevent and Reſtrain the Sinner. And in truth all Men whatever that live on Earth, ſtand in need of ſuch Diſcipline, not only for the Exerciſe and Trial of their Virtues: but alſo for the Improvement and Increaſe of them. Good Men have therefore ſome Afflictions, becauſe they alſo have ſome Sins to be Chaſtiſed; and the Wicked have Temporal Bleſſings, becauſe they alſo have ſome virtuous Actions to be Rewarded. For asthere is ſcarce any Man ſo Bad, but he has ſome Good Qualities and Commendable Moral Virtues: So God, having appointed another time in which he will Puniſh his Iniquities, may think fit to Recompence theſe Virtues now, and to reward the Juſtice of the Intemperate

perate Man; and the Generoſity of the Unclean; with ſuitable Comforts and Advantages, by aſſigning him his Portion upon Earth. Theſe Things not only vindicate his Righteouſneſs, but in ſome Reſpect evince the Advantages of Religion too. For if the Wicked Part of Mankind had greater Virtues, they then might hope for greater Recompences in this Life. And if the Religious had fewer Faults, and fewer Offences to be corrected: they alſo might hope for fewer Sorrows, and lighter Tribulations.

Good Mens Afflictions, the great Evidence of a future State.

2. Another Reaſon of this is, to keep alive our Expectations of a future World. For as I have obſerved above, if Good Men were only and always Proſperous, and the Wicked only and always Afflicted: there would be leſſer Reaſon and Neceſſity of a future Judgment; and Men would be more inclined to believe that all the Good or Evil that ſhall befall them, muſt be in this preſent Life. One of the ſtrongeſt Arguments and ſureſt Proofs of another World ariſes from the Unexact Adminiſtration of Divine Providence in this; And therefore

it becomes highly neceſſary, that God, however he favours the Good, ſhould not wholly exempt them from Afflictions; nor however he Hates the Wicked, make them always Miſerable and deſpiſed here: leaſt in that he ſhould ſeem to undermine the Certainty of their Future Expectations. This then is not taking away the Advantage of Good Men, but only ſubjecting the lower Affairs of this Tranſient Life, to the greater Benefit of Mankind, with Reſpect to that Better State that is to be eternal. And ſeeing we have ſo great Reaſon to Expect and Believe another State, as indeed we have; tho it does ſometimes Diminiſh, and Diſturb our Eaſe and Peace here on Earth: yet it is an abundant Vindication both of the Wiſdom, and of the Goodneſs of God; that the Good and Felicity of Mankind is finally aimed at and intended thereby. But

And Serviceable to ſome Extraordinary Ends.

3. Let me add alſo that almoſt all extraordinary, and Laſting Calamities of very Good Men, are very Singular and Extraordinary Caſes; ſuch as but ſeldom happen; and when they do, are particularly ordain'd

dain'd of God to ſome very Extraordinary Purpoſes. Such were the Afflictions of *Joſeph*, of *Job*, *David*, *Daniel*, *Jeremiah*, *John Baptiſt*, and of *Chriſt* himſelf, and his *Apoſtles*. Theſe were ſuch as God eminently ſet forth to be Examples to the World; and by whom he was to diſplay the Wonderful Works of his Providence, and the Power of Religion; and to accompliſh for Mankind ſome Great Things. And therefore theſe Extraordinary Caſes ought in Juſtice to be excepted.

Having premiſed theſe things, to vindicate the Righteouſneſs and Goodneſs of God in his Providences, and to give ſome general Hints as to the Reaſons and Purpoſes of them: it will be eaſy from hence to break the Strength of this Objection; by obſerving;

2. That as it Amounts to no more than this; that Religion will not totally exempt us from all Troubles and Afflictions; nor certainly ſecure to us all Bleſſings and Comforts: This alone is not a Conſideration of Sufficient Force to diſcourage us in the Practice of our Duty. For what? *This no juſt Diſcouragement. For,*

Is there no Bliſs, no Conſolation but in a Perfection of Felicity, and an Abſolute Exemption from all Sorrow? Alas, this is a State of too much Sin, and too many, and too Great Offences to admit of that; for Sin muſt and will bring certain Miſery along with it. But is it nothing to be Miſerable in a leſs Degree, and to paſs through this Valley of Tears with Drier Eyes, and more Chearful Hearts, and Greater Comforts than other Men? Yes, this is a valuable Conſolation.

But ſay they, the Beſt of Men we read of in Scripture are ſo Eminent for their Sufferings, that we cannot be ſecure of that. I anſwer again, Thoſe Eminent Men were by the particular Appointment of God ſet forth as Eminent Examples of Patience and Conſtancy: and theirs being Extraordinary Caſes are to be excepted. And I confeſs alſo, that when God has any glorious purpoſes to ſerve by the Sufferings of his Servants: He may in ſuch Caſes ordain, that *thro' much Tribulation*, we alſo *ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* But then, theſe being Singular Caſes that do

do but ſeldom happen, ought no more to diſcourage Men from a ſincere Regard to the Practice of Religion: than the Extraordinary Accidents of Fires in Towns and Cities ought to diſcourage Men from ever having Habitations and Storehouſes adjoyning to thoſe of other Men. In ſhort, notwithſtanding all that can be pleaded from ſuch Examples: it is a Wiſe thing to prefer, and chooſe a Religious Life upon the Account of the Preſent Advantages that attend it. For,

I. A Good Man has ſtill the Natural Influence of Religion, and all its Virtues on his Side; of Diligence, Frugality, Temperance, Sobriety and Juſtice to help him forward. The Advantages of which cannot be better ſeen than by a ſhort Review of the Miſchiefs of the contrary Vices. For do not many Men make themſelves Miſerable by their Vices, to a very great Degree; that might have been Happy and Fortunate had they been Religious and Good? Are there not many Poor and Beggar'd by their Vices? Many Decrepit and

The Natural Influence has place ſtill.

Infirm, and that ſhorten their Days by their Vices? Nay in truth, it's ſeldom that the *Riotous Eaters of Fleſh*, and the intemperate Drinkers of Wine, and the Senſual and Exorbitant Debauchee, can eſcape thoſe Miſerable Calamities. So alſo for Juſtice, a Man may poſſibly gain by a Fraudulent Crafty Device to overreach another; but how often is it that ſuch ſuffer more in their Reputation, than they ever gain'd by their frauds? And therefore,

Good Men are generally Safe.

II. Another Advantage they have herein is; that Innocence is more Safe, and involves Men in fewer Dangers. There are no conſiderable Difficulties in doing Good. The Paths of Duty are Smooth, and Plain, and Secure; being guarded by God, and his Holy Angels. But the Ways of Sin are Difficult and Perplext, crooked Paths, full of Briars and Thorns, of Various Windings, Intricate Turnings, and Confuſed Mazes; Infeſted by the Crafty Serpent, all whoſe Conduct is employed to lead Unhappy Men aſtray. He that does Evil has this certain Miſery, that *he Wanders*

ders in Darkneſs, and *knoweth not whither he goeth.* Jo. xii. 34.
He Projects, and laies fine Scenes; but the very Contrivance is perplext, and the Event hazardous. There muſt be anxious Solicitude and Thoughtfulneſs of Heart in forming any ill Deſign; Care in the Concealment; Diligence and Warineſs and Caution in the Proſecution. For as the Work is Difficult ſo the Event is Uncertain, and a Diſappointment, Pernicious and Fatal. Some, it's true, have ſucceeded, but others have been deſtroyed. *Haman* to gratify his Envy ſought the Deſtruction of *Mordecai*; but failing in his Attempt, was himſelf Executed on the ſame Gibbet, that he had raiſed for his Enemy. And all Hiſtories, both Sacred and Profane, are full of Inſtances of Men that have ruin'd themſelves by doing ill.

An Ingenuous Author that was pleaſed to repreſent the Actions and Follies of Men by Alluſions and Parables of Beaſts: tell us, that the Aſs, ſeeing the Hog ſlain in Sacrifice that had been well fed with Barley, was ſo alarm'd at his End; that he would not eat the Remainder of his

Meat, leſt he alſo ſhould have the ſame Fate. The Application which the Ingenuous Poet makes of the Fable is this,

Phædrus.

Periculoſum ſemper vitavi Lucrum.
Qui rapuere Divitias habent;
Numeremus agedum qui deprenſi perierint,
Majorem turbam punitorum invenies.

I am afraid, ſaies he, *of thoſe Advantages that are merely Accidental, and attended with apparent Miſchiefs. If you compare thoſe that have Succeeded, with thoſe that have Miſcarried; you'l find the greater Number of the Diſappointed.* This was not ſpoken in favour of Chriſtianity, but by a Witty Heathen, Inſtructed only by his common Notions and Experience of the Vengeance that often overtakes the Wicked. And if theſe things be at all Reaſonable or True: it would argue a Defect of underſtanding, beyond what is commonly imputed to this contemptible Beaſt in the Fable; not to be afraid off, and avoid ſo apparent Dangers.

The

The *Sceptic* in *Tully* objects againſt the Providence of God over Men, a Catalogue of ſome Enormous Sinners, Oppreſſors, and Tyrants that had been always Succeſsful. But he takes no notice of the Infinite Number of ſuch as have been ſignally ruin'd in Impious Attempts; and yet all Hiſtories are full of ſuch Inſtances. But theſe are forgotten or overlookt, becauſe the Wretched End of ſuch Vile Men is ſo agreeable to our Thoughts; that no body Wonders at, or Remarks them. He mentions alſo ſome Great Robbers and Thieves that had eſcap'd the Viſible Vengeance of God. But how much larger a Catalogue can every Age produce, of ſuch, whoſe laſt End plainly ſhews; that their greateſt Advantages would have been, to have been Religious in good Earneſt? And this is one great Advantage in being ſo, that there are ſo Great, and ſuch Apparent Dangers in doing Ill, as a Wiſe Man would not venture, and a Good Man is always ſafe from. But that's not all. For,

III. The

The Promiſes are a Security to us, tho they do not exempt us from all troubles.

III. The Promiſes of God are not thus to be given up, as affording us only an Inconſtant and Uncertain Comfort: in that there is a Real and a great Advantage in them. For can we find none Proſperous, and Fortunate, and Bleſt with Worldly Bleſſings for being Religious? Certainly we can. For what was *Noah* preſerv'd in the Ark, when the whole World was deſtroyed by a Flood? Was it not becauſe he was Righteous and Religious? And for what was Juſt *Lot* delivered from the Deſtruction of *Sodom*, when it was burnt with Fire from Heaven for the Wickedneſs of the People? Was it not for that Piety by which he gain'd the Character of *Juſt?* And tho' theſe things were a great while ago: yet God governs the World ſtill by the ſame Methods and Rules of Wiſdom, and Goodneſs which he uſed then. Only perhaps his Bleſſings to the Righteous might be more Signal, and his Vengeance to the Wicked more ſevere: becauſe they were to be written for our Encouragement and Inſtruction.

To

To infer then from the Various Providences of God, that our own Actions have little or no Influence on our preſent Condition, is a falſe Concluſion. He may and does Puniſh many Sinners, tho' he does not Puniſh all. And he may and does Generally Proſper Good Men, tho' he does not Proſper all. And no Man knows, but that proportionably to the Number of Good and Bad Men; there are more Good Men Fortunate, than Wicked ones.

The great Difficulty is, that we do not always know the Cauſes and Reaſons of God's Diſpenſations. And this is all that ſeems to be intended by thoſe Words, *Eccleſ.* 9. 1, 2. *That there is one Event to the Righteous, and to the Wicked*, &c. Not that there is really no Difference, for we may ſee plainly that there is a great deal: but that the Difference is not always Obſerved. *There be Juſt Men to whom it happeneth according to the Work of the Wicked; and there be Wicked Men to whom it happeneth according to the Work of the Righteous: and by this means no Man knoweth either Love or Hatred by all that is before him*; becauſe this is not the

Eccleſ. 8. 18.

the Place of an exact Retribution. Or elſe if you will, from hence a great Part of Mankind are induc'd to Believe and Conclude, that there is no Difference at all; becauſe the Difference is not Univerſal, and without Exception. For thus (*Grotius*) a very Learned Expoſitor interprets the Place; that theſe Things were ſpoken only as the Common Notions and Opinions of the World, about the Adminiſtration of the Affairs of it; rather than King *Solomon's* own Thoughts. And of thoſe eſpecially, who believed the Doctrine of Fate, and thought all things managed by the blind Undiſtinguiſhing Adminiſtration of Chance.

And this is certainly moſt agreeable to the Divine Preacher's Opinion. For *Cap.* 8. 12. He expreſly declares; *Tho' a Sinner do Evil an hundred times, and his Days be prolonged: yet ſurely I know it ſhall be well with them that fear God.* Whatever various Succeſſes there may be, he confidently aſſerts; that there is certain Happineſs to the Righteous. And whatever various Succeſſes there ſhall be, we ſee it as clear as a Demonſtra-

monſtration: that there are Multitudes of Men made Unhappy by their Vices. That one Man is Infamous and of Low Eſteem; another Poor and Beggarly; a third Feeble and Infirm in Body: who might have eſcaped all thoſe Sufferings if they would have abſtained from the Sins which brought thoſe Evils on them.

But becauſe the Various Providences of God, and particularly the Afflictions of Good Men are ſo eagerly objected, againſt the Comforts we look for in his Promiſes, and the Advantages that we Expect in Obedience: I will come a little cloſer yet, and ſhow you two or three Real, Certain, and Undoubted Benefits in his Favour that we have under all this Variety. And they are theſe.

An Exemption from all Unreaſonable Afflictions.

1. That in theſe Promiſes we are abundantly ſecur'd, that God never will Afflict us but to ſome Wiſe, and Good, and Juſt Ends. As our Natural Apprehenſions of his Power come in to confirm the Authority of Scripture, which tells us that all our Affairs are in his Hand, and the Suc-

Succeſs and Event of all our Labours at his diſpoſal: ſo our Notions of his Goodneſs, and Love, and Pity give ſo much Authority to his Promiſes; as to ſecure us, that he never does, and that he never will Afflict us without a very Juſt and Reaſonable Cauſe.

And it is no ſmall Conſolation that we have in this; It ſecures us from all thoſe Melancholy Doubts, and Jealous Fears that Men in former times liv'd under for want of ſuch Aſſurance. It is, Methinks, a very Uncomfortable Account, that *Solon*, one of the moſt Celebrated Wiſe Men of *Greece* gives the King of *Lydia*, as the Principle of Man's Afflictions and the Cauſe of the great Inſtability of all Humane Affairs, *That all the Gods are Envious, and Delight in the Tribulations of Mankind.* Such Apprehenſions muſt be attended with great Uneaſineſs, and make the moſt Proſperous Fortune leaſt ſecure: becauſe the moſt likely to move their Envy. But in the Love of God, and that great Tenderneſs, and Compaſſion from whence all his Promiſes proceed: we are delivered from all theſe

Τὸ θεῖον, πᾶν ἐὸν φθονερὸν ἐὸν τε καὶ ταραχῶδες. Herodot. Clio. 32.

theſe Fears. By our Sins indeed we may provoke him, and by our Obſtinate and Incorrigible Iniquities we may Extort Judgments from him, notwithſtanding all his Love; and violently pull down thoſe Calamities upon our ſelves from which otherwiſe we might be Free. But if we be Faithfully and Sincerely Good, we then may be Secure. Secure, not from all Croſſes and Sorrows; for a State of Sin will not admit of that. But tho' as Sinners we may have Sufferings, yet as Humble, Contrite, and Penitent Sinners; as Servants Sincerely Obedient, tho' but with an Imperfect Service; we ſhall be ſecure from all Unneceſſary Afflictions; from all but what ſhall be Ordained and Appointed for us to very Wiſe and Profitable Ends. And it is a Bleſſing, and a Conſiderable Conſolation; to be exempt from all Unjuſt and Unreaſonable Diſtreſſes. For

From all Tribulations but what we may make Beneficial to us.

2. We are hereby aſſured alſo, that we ſhall never fall under any Tribulations, but what by Patience and Submiſſion; what by a Wiſe and Pious Conduct, will turn unſpeakably to our Benefit. Whatever be the Ends

Ends and Deſigns of God's Diſpenſations, which we are not always allow'd to prie into: yet this the Holy Spirit of God has declar'd, that they ſhall *all work together for Good to them that Love and Fear God.* In particular; Are Good Men Afflicted for Chaſtiſement, and for the Correction of ſome Frailties and Miſcarriages, and Defects in their Behaviour, that God by this Trial would cleanſe and purify them from? If by Patience and Repentance they anſwer this Good End, they Profit by it: and come out of it, like Silver from the Refiner's Fire; more Pure and more Valuable; more Beloved of God, more Precious in his Sight, and much ſecurer of his Favour for ever after.

Or is it to prevent their falling into ſome unforeſeen Tranſgreſſions, by cutting off the dangerous Temptation: when they, confiding too much in their own Strength, and Good Intentions, like St. *Peter* in his haſty Vow, the more eaſily would be betrayed? If this be the Reaſon; in preventing the Sin who knows but that God prevents alſo a more heavy

heavy Calamity which their Diſobedience would pull down upon them?

Or Laſtly, It is for the Trial and Exerciſe of their Virtue? If it be, the Apoſtle tell us, that Chriſtians *therefore Glory in Tribulations, knowing that Tribulation worketh Patience, and Patience Experience, and Experience Hope*, and that not an Ordinary and Common Expectation; but that of a more Glorious and Exceeding great Reward. According to that Declaration of our Bleſſed Lord: *Bleſſed are they that Mourn, for they ſhall be comforted.*

Rom. 5. 3.

Mat. 5. 4.

But moreover: It often happens that Mankind calls thoſe little Rubs, and Diſappointments Afflictions; which the Almighty ſometimes makes uſe of to our Greater Benefit and Advantage in this preſent Life. Such were the Afflictions and Diſappointments of *Joſeph*, which tho' to our firſt Appearance Grievous and Vexatious: yet could any Man but have been acquainted with God's final Purpoſe and Intention in that Adminiſtration; and have foreſeen the advantageous End of all that Vexatious Scene, he would have choſen

it. There was nothing in it all, but what his own Advancement, and the Proviſion he thereby made for his Father and all his Houſe, in the extremity of Famine, did abundantly repay.

And thus it often happens in Our Affairs, but that we being too Ignorant and Short-ſighted to diſcern the Benefit; and having too little Confidence in our God to Truſt in him for the Event: Judge rather by our Paſſions and Inclinations; and on theſe Accounts load the Government and Providence of God with Grievous Murmurs, and Severe Complaints: for thoſe very Diſpenſations; in which his Power and his Wiſdom are to be Adored, and his Goodneſs to be praiſed.

But in the worſt that ever happens; that is, which we Fooliſhly and Ignorantly, judging only by our Inclinations and Deſires, call the worſt: it is but making the Tranſient and Uncertain Affairs of this lower World, ſubſervient to the more Important Deſigns of God, and the more valuable Intereſts of Eternity. In which we ſhall be Bleſ-

ſed

ſed with a Reward ſo Glorious and ſo exceeding Great, that Chriſt himſelf the Captain of our Salvation, though he had the ſame Paſſions with our ſelves, and the ſame quick Senſe of Sufferings: yet as the Apoſtle expreſſes it; *he endured the Croſs, and deſpiſed the Shame, for the Joy that was ſet before him.* Heb. 12. 2. But

They ſecure us of ſufficient Strength under all Afflictions.

3. As we have ſaid already, that theſe are extraordinary Caſes, and ſuch as but ſeldom happen: So there is this farther Comfort and Advantage that attends Good Men in them: that God always ſupplies and ſupports Men under them, with ſuch Uncommon and Extraordinary Meaſures of Divine Grace, as their Circumſtances call for.

But why do I inſiſt ſo long on this? It is to make out, that notwithſtanding all the great Variety of Divine Providences, and the many Tribulations of Good Men: yet ſtill there are Certain Comforts, and Great Advantages in doing Good, and no ſmall Security in the Protection of God's Power, and the Bleſſings that he ſo frequently promiſes in Holy Scripture. This is Certainly and Undoubtedly

doubtedly True. For tho' it does not amount to a Total Immunity from all Misfortunes; yet it is a Bleſſing, and a Comfort, and a great Advantage to have the Favour of God towards us, and a Reaſonable Expectation of his Aſſiſtance in all our Honeſt and Commendable Undertakings. To be Beloved of him, and entitled to his Protection; and ſecure, in his faithful Word and Promiſes, of his Care over us. But were not all this ſo Evident as it is, yet we may know that Religion contributes much to our Happineſs, if we Remember.

Religion affords the moſt Noble and Valuable Delights.

IV. *Laſtly*, That the Happineſs of Humane Life does not conſiſt all in Wealth and Grandeur only, nor muſt it reaſonably be Meaſured in Proportion to the Outward Circumſtances of Fortune: but to Mens Comforts and Enjoyments, and to the Inward Contentment and Satisfaction that they find therein. And here the great Advantage of a Holy Life will eminently appear. For as *Solon* well enough obſerved; *They who have the moſt Plentiful Eſtates are not al-*

always moſt Eaſy, nor Enjoy the moſt ſolid Pleaſures and Contentments, for there are many Proſperous in their Fortune but yet Unhappy; and many leſs Wealthy that have yet greater Joys. And though that Philoſopher was miſtaken in his Notions of the Deities, upon which he thought, that they ſent Afflictions upon Men: yet as to the Numerous and Various Contingencies that deſtroy our Felicity; hewas better taught by every Days Experience. And the Truth of what he here affirms is ſo certain, that it were eaſy to ſhew by Ten Thouſand Inſtances, that no outward Circumſtances can give Happineſs; whiie there is upon any occaſion an Aking Heart within. A Guilty Conſcience, nay an unruly Paſſion, or vicious Inclination ſhall ſometimes ſo Ruffle and Diſcompoſe a Man: that he ſhall have no true Pleaſure; no Real Satisfaction in all things round about him. Let *Ahab*, the mighty King of *Iſrael*, but ſet his impatient Heart on the ſmall Vineyard of *Naboth* the *Jezreelite*: and if he cannot have his eager Deſire anſwered: Envy and Avarice, and Rage, ſhall ſo di-

Οὐ γὰρ ϛοι ὁ μέγα πλῶσι· ϑ μᾶλλον τῶ ἐπ' ἡμέρην ἔχον]ϑ ὀλβιώτερϑ ἐσι. πολλοὶ μὲν γὰρ ζάπλουϛοι ἀνθρώπων ἀνόλβιοί εἰσι. πολλοὶ δὲ μετρίως ἔχον]ες, βίᾳ εὐτυχέες. *Herod. Clio.*

ſturb, and torment his Mind, and his Diſcontent run ſo high: that all the Pompous Glories of his Kingdom ſhall not appeaſe him. He will in the depth of Melancholy retire from all Converſation; and lay himſelf down Mournfully upon his Couch; and receive no Comfort.

This therefore may be look'd on as one of the ſingular Benefits of an Holy Life; that beſides the Natural Influence it has to procure us theſe neceſſary Goods, whereby we muſt Subſiſt: when that is done, it teaches us alſo to Suppreſs and Moderate all the Exorbitances of our Appetites and Deſires; which theſe things alone can never Satisfy. And thereby it lays a Firm, and laſting Foundation for that true Peace and Subſtantial Happineſs, which they alone can never give. The Wiſe Philoſopher who condemned the Vanity of Mankind for placing their Bliſs in External Things: learnt this ſound Wiſdom from common Obſervation. It muſt be Vain to look for Felicity in thoſe Things which are not only without us, and out of our Power to keep: but even while we have

have them cannot ſatisfy the Deſires they have raiſed, but leave us Uneaſy, and Roving about, with a wild Diſcontent in the midſt of all that we Poſſeſs. For tho' I muſt confeſs, that in this Mortal Life we have in ſome Meaſure our Subſiſtance from the Things of this World: yet not all our Comforts. For being once raiſed above Want, and above Contempt in our Rank and Order in the World: the reſt of our Felicity we muſt look from our Selves. I mean from our Actions, and our Converſation, and our Enjoyments; from that Peace of Mind, and Joy of Heart, that reſult from doing Good: and from the Aſſurance we have of the Love and Favour of our God therein.

To make this the more Evident, let us ſuppoſe two Men, I will not ſay of equal Circumſtances; but the one abounding with Wealth, and Honour, and Authority, and all that this World can give, only at the ſame time very Wicked and Vicious. The other, not indeed under any preſſing Calamity, of Poverty, or Sickneſs, or the like: but it may be in a middle Condition, and lower

Station; only truly Virtuous and Good in all his Actions. Now, if the Religious Man be found even in the genuine Fruits of his Holineſs, more eaſy and Calm; more truly Chearful and Pleaſant, and Poſſeſt of Greater and Truer Comforts, in a Meaner Fortune, and Lower Eſtate: Where's the Benefit of all this Superabundant Plenty? or the Reaſon of all this mighty Buſtle about it? Or how is it not much more Eligible and Wiſe, by ſerving God in the Sincere Practice of Religion; to ſecure his Bleſſing and his Favour, from whence the Trueſt Comforts and the greateſt Pleaſures, moſt certainly ariſe? Why is it not better to have a Sanctified Portion tho' a leſſer one, in which, as in the Land of *Goſhen*, we ſhall find Light, and Reſt, and Joy, and Peace: when the larger Tracts of *Egypt* lie all in Darkneſs and Confuſion.

And to make the Difference of theſe two States yet more conſpicuous, let us obſerve a little more the Diſtinguiſhing Circumſtances of each apart. I'le begin with the Wicked Man; in whom we ſhall find firſt, a Mul-

Multitude of Natural Evils, that almoſt Univerſally and Unavoidably attend every Vice, and every great Iniquity. Shall we ſuppoſe Wicked Men to run no hazards, no dangers in their diſorderly practices: when we know that by the Miſchief of Sin Thouſands have been deſtroyed? Are there no Troubles, no Croſſes, no Vexations, in theſe Rough and Crooked Paths of Sinners? Certainly there are; and ſuch as are much to be lamented. But to ſhew the Comforts of Religion in their true Light, we will be content for once to wave them all; and ſuppoſe a Wicked Man not to have ſacrificed all his Eſtate to his Luſts, which moſt ſenſual Perſons do; and not to have waſted his Subſtance in Riotous Living, though he that will live Riotouſly can ſcarce poſſibly avoid it. Suppoſe his Sins not yet to have brought upon him feebleneſs of Limbs, Rottenneſs of Bones, and Decrepitneſs even of Youth; and yet there are many thus miſerable by their Pleaſures. Let us, if it be poſſible, forget all thoſe wretched Evils, and Plagues which daily Experience ſhews us to be the preſent

preſent wages of Sin; and view only their Comforts and their Pleaſures. The Queſtion then is, what their *Happineſs* is, above that of other Men? Is it that they are Healthful? So there are ten thouſand good Men; and I am apt to think that their Iniquities never made them ſo. Or is it that they live at Eaſe? So do almoſt all Men that live Religiouſly, and ſerve God; *Jam ſumus ergo pares*; Here then is yet no Advantage to the Sinner above the Juſt.

Is it then in the Noble Pleaſures, and more valuable Delights of Sin? Lets conſider what they are: Is their Sleep more Quiet, or do their Minds enjoy more Peace? If they retain any Apprehenſions of God; any Senſe of Duty; any Serious Thoughts of Death, and Judgment, and Hell: I am ſure they cannot boaſt of Inward Peace; The Fears and Terrors that do, and muſt attend ſuch Thoughts as theſe, will ſower all their Joys, and after all their mighty expectations of Delights, change the Scene, ſpoil their Projects, defeat their Hopes, and fill their Souls full of Horror and Anguiſh, and Amazement. Let their Con-

Conſciences be once awaken'd, and the *Terrors of the Lord ſet in array againſt* them; and in all their Gayety and Splendor; and in all their Equipage and State: they can find no Eaſe, they have a dejected Spirit, and a trembling Heart.

This is ſo great a Truth, that thoſe who aim at Pleaſures and Happineſs in this Life, otherwiſe than as Religion allows, are forc'd to baniſh all thoughts of it, as far as they can. They ſee a Neceſſity to forget God, and put all ſober reflections from them at a Diſtance. Till this is done they ſee their Happineſs will all come to nothing. Let us therefore ſuppoſe this too, and then what will be the Conſequence? Why then, they Revel without Reſtraint; They Eat and Drink till Nature groans under the Burden of their Exceſſes; they take their Fill of Wine and Pleaſure; they inflame their Blood, and drown their Senſes, and loſe their Reaſon. They Rant, they Roar, they Swear, they Curſe, they Blaſpheme, they hazard their Eſtates at the Chance of a Dye; they Quarrel, they Murther one another, they bask in Senſuality, and defile

defile themſelves with ſhameful Uncleanneſs and abominable Luſts: and theſe are their Pleaſures, and this is the difference.

And is this all? Are theſe their Noble, Manly Joys? Juſt thus have we ſeen a ſenſual Swine o'rewhelmed with Mud and Mire; wallow, and roul, and bask, and extend it ſelf in Filthineſs; and almoſt with as good a grace, applaud the Bliſs. Indeed, nothing but what is degenerated into the Loweſt and moſt Infamous Beſtiality: can place their Happineſs in ſuch exorbitant Practices as theſe. Is it in this then that Religion is ſo much our Enemy? and are theſe the precious Joys that it forbids? Hard is our Fate, no doubt, and much to be bewail'd; that God will not be content we ſhould live like Beaſts: when he has made us Men.

But ſure the moſt harden'd Sinner of them all muſt Bluſh, and be Aſhamed; to hear that Theſe are the Delights, for the love of which he bids Defiance to his God, and condemns his Righteous Laws and Government as Tyranny. Theſe may be Pleaſures to him who is Degenerated enough

to

to think them ſo: but true Happineſs conſiſts in ſomething that is more agreeable with the uncorrupt Diſpoſitions of Humane Nature. The Hog may be pleaſed with Mire, but if the purer Ermin were conſtrained to be polluted in it; it would languiſh, and pine away, and die. Juſt ſo it is in the Pleaſures of Men. And yet Wicked Men, in the great Degeneracy and Depravity of their Natures, conceit that there is no real Bliſs but in the Pleaſures of Sin: nor any true Joys but in gratifying their Vicious Inclinations and Deſires. Extravagant, Vain, and Unnatural Thoughts! The Pleaſures of Sin can never make Men truly Happy; becauſe they yield no Inward Contentment, no Satisfaction and Peace to the Mind. But beſides the Shame, and the Want, and the Diſeaſes which they often bring along with them: they have Bitterneſs, and Remorſe, and Fear, and Terrors in their latter End. Men are puſht on to them, by the Impetuous Violence of Depraved Appetites and Luſts; and while in indulging theſe they look for Joy; they meet with Anguiſh, and Vexation, and Torment.

And

And in this is ſeen the Wiſdom and Happineſs of a Religious Converſation; that when theſe debauch'd Appetites are once ſubdu'd: Men find more Joy, and greater Glory in their Conqueſt, than ever they did Satisfaction in Indulging them. And however the firſt attempt may have the appearance of Difficulty and Hardſhip: yet the Undertaking is Glorious, and Commendable; and the Succeſs a great Felicity; in that it is attended with Sweet Complacency, and Peace, and Aſſurance for ever.

There is no Man who has taſted the true Reliſh of Religious, Virtuous, and Holy Actions: but he muſt infinitely prefer them to all the Sordid and Brutal Delights of Debauchery and Iniquity. Nay if he has had no Experience of them, Reaſon, and a little Conſideration may ſoon teach him, that the Pleaſures of the Mind muſt needs exceed all thoſe of our Bodily Appetites. For by how much the Faculties of the Soul are more Noble, and more Excellent than thoſe of our Bodies: by ſo much are its Pains more Exquiſite, and its Delight

lights more Lovely. Let the Wicked then be pleaſed with the Sordid Pleaſures of Love and Wine; certainly the Good Man has more Solid and Subſtantial Comforts; more Noble and Refined Joys, in the Peace of his Conſcience, and the Favour of God in doing Good. And which is a conſiderable Advantage, 'tis a Joy more Laſting, and brings no Regret, no Repentance after it. This is a Pleaſure too, which the Good-Man always has within himſelf. It depends but a little on the Things that are without him; It is not ſubject to Viciſſitudes and Changes, at the Unconſtancy of ſlippery Fortune. It is ſtable and firm; and nothing but what violates his Innocence can diſturb his Peace. Theſe Delights are ſo tranſcending, that he can rejoyce even in Tribulations, and have ſome Comforts under thoſe Diſtreſſes and Calamities: that depreſs and ſink other Men into intolerable and extream Deſpair.

Not as tho' we pretended that Poverty, and Loſſes, and Diſaſters are no Afflictions; or that Chriſtians do not feel them; that were Stoical and Stupid

Stupid Inſenſibility. But this, that the Comfort of Innocence, and the Pleaſure of doing Good; the Hope of God's Favour and Love; the Calmneſs of a Good Conſcience; and the Peace of a Quiet Mind, do ſo Chear and Refreſh the Spirits of Men; that they can Rejoyce, and Sing, and Glory in Tribulations. Their Happiñeſs in doing Good is ſo Great; and their Joy in God's Favour ſo full: that they would not change their Calamitous Circumſtances with the Fortunate and the Proſperous Sinner. They would not Revolt from God, they would not forſake his Laws, to free themſelves from all the ſmarteſt Sufferings; and to gain the choiceſt Pleaſures of Sin into the Bargain.

Such as theſe are the Advantages and Comforts of an Holy Life. And I have been the longer on this Head, it being the common Topic, by which the ſubtle Enemy of our Souls, ſo frequently Deludes, and Decoys Mankind: that I could ſcarce ſay leſs without Injuſtice to my Cauſe. Indeed it moves both Wonder, and Indignation, to behold ſo Noble, and

Ex-

Excellent a Creature as Man; A Creature endued with Reaſon, and Principles of Wiſdom; and deſign'd for Happineſs: ſo Unreaſonably and Fooliſhly rob'd, and cheated of it. To find him allur'd with a ſpecious Pretence of Felicity, and Pleaſure; in that which affords but very little, and that Fatal to him too. To ſee him drawn away into an ill Opinion of Religion, and frighted from its Duties, as tho' it was an Enemy to all his Delights: when the moſt Solid, and Valuable are ſuch as that, and that alone can give.

So Gracious has our God been to us, that our Duty, and our Happineſs are reconciled; and center both in one. Heaven, and a Bleſſed Immortality in a future State is, 'tis true, the Reward he chiefly Promiſes, and has Covenanted hereafter to beſtow: But he does not leave us wholly without a Recompence at preſent. *Godlineſs has the Promiſe of this Life, as well as of that which is to come.* And whoever does but carefully view Things, and with an Impartial Eye, will quickly find wherein it amply is ful filled. So that, although it were

moſt certainly our Wiſdom to be Religious, for the ſake of the next World, however it far'd with us here; in that it is a Dreadful thing to be Miſerable to Eternity: yet we are much more obliged, when it makes us Happy both *here* and *hereafter* alſo. It certainly directs us to the Wiſeſt and the Secureſt Courſe of being ſo; it gives Peace to our Minds, and Satisfaction to our Souls; and fills us with Joy; and entertains us with Pleaſures: the Trueſt, and moſt Valuable, and moſt Laſting that on this ſide Heaven we are capable of enjoying.

Wretched then, and doubly forlorn is the Condition of that Unhappy Man, who lets go the Subſtance to perſue the Shaddow, and ſo becomes diſappointed in them both. Juſt ſo is every one that Neglects Religion, and diſobeys his God, for the mean Delights of a ſinful Vicious Life. He leaves the Subſtance, and in a vain Miſtaken Perſuit of Happineſs: he meets only with Vexation and Diſappointment. And while in Obedience to God's Laws he might have ſecured Great and Valuable Com-

Comforts here, and Perfect and Eternal Bliſs hereafter: blinded by his Luſts, and perverted by his looſe Deſires; he becomes deplorably Miſerable in both. He drudges on in Shame, and Diſgrace, and Diſeſteem; in Sickneſs, and Pains, and Diſcontent; and it may be too in Want and Poverty; but certainly in Doubts, and Fears, and great Remorſe; in Unquiet Thoughts, and Jealous Apprehenſions, full of Terror, and Torment here: and finally has his Recompence hereafter in Eternal Condemnation. In this reſpect therefore is *Job*'s Declaration undoubtedly verified; *that the Fear of the Lord is the trueſt Wiſdom, and to depart from Evil the chiefeſt Underſtanding:* and Bleſſed is he who makes ſo right a Judgment, and ſo Wiſe a Choice, as to ſeek for Happineſs therein. *Length of Days are in her Right hand, and in her Left Hand Riches and Honour: her Ways are Ways of Pleaſantneſs, and all her Paths are Peace.*

Job 28. 28.

Prov. 3. 16. 17.

CHAP V.

The Happineſs of the Juſt in Heaven.

FRom what has been ſaid in Compariſon of a Virtuous and Wicked Life together: I cannot but Hope and Perſwade my ſelf, that Religion will be thought a Real and Great Advantage to our Preſent Happineſs; and to contribute much to the Good and Felicity of Mankind even Here on Earth. But yet, it is not to be diſſembled, that ſuch is the Frailty of Humane Nature, and the Condition of Mankind in this State of Trial: that both our Obedience, and our Felicity have very great Defects. And the Joys of a Good Man, tho' Solid and Satisfactory in compariſon to thoſe of the Sinner: yet, thro' our Natural Infirmities, are frequently Mixt and Allay'd with Diſtreſſes and Tribulations.

Future expectations the ſtrongeſt motives to Religion.

Therefore it is that, tho' the Advantages are ſuch as will abundantly vindicate the Wiſdom of thoſe who Chooſe

Chooſe it; yet they are not ſuch, but that a Man long engag'd in a Vicious Life, and ſtrongly Addicted to pleaſe his Luſts; may Deſpiſe, and be willing to forego them all; for the ſake of thoſe Delights that are more agreeable to his Debaucht, Sordid, and Brutal Appetites. And for this Reaſon the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God, to make Religion more Efficacious, and more fit Univerſally to perſwade: has in the Goſpel of Chriſt uſed Stronger and more Moving Arguments. Such as if we do not Harden our Hearts extreamly, will make a Deep Impreſſion upon them; will Alarm our Drouzie Conſciences; Awaken our Sleeping Fears; check our looſe Deſires; and Reſtrain our moſt Impetuous Luſts. If we reflect upon them ſeriouſly; and apply our Minds to conſider them well: Maugre all the Force of Vicious Habits, and Evil Inclinations; they will give a Shock to our moſt Obſtinate, and Perverſe Reſolutions of living Wickedly.

Theſe Arguments are taken from the Rewards, and Puniſhments that that God has Reſerved and Decreed

for Mankind, at the laſt Judgment of the World. Which are ſuch, that however Tempting the Advantages, however Alluring the Pleaſures of Sin may ſeem; yet when the After-reckoning comes to be remembered, it concerns every Man, tho *he live many Days and rejoyce in them all*, eſpecially to *remember the Days of Darkneſs*; and to conſider, whether the Pleaſure of Vice can ever Recompence the Torments to be afterward endured; Or the Trouble and Difficulty of Virtue, bear any Compariſon to the Tranſcendent Glory, and Felicity with which God will at laſt Crown our Labours. Prize the Delights of Sin as highly as you can; Raiſe their Eſteem to their moſt Exalted Pitch; yet ſtill, the Scene will not end here. Hell is to be their final Recompence, and that's a Place of Miſery and Torment. Load Religion with all the Malicious Accuſations of Irkſom, and Difficult, and Slaviſh, and the reſt of thoſe Vile Imputations which the Envious Fiends of Hell have put into the Minds of Wicked Men: yet ſtill, Heaven is its Reward, and that's a Bright, a Glorious

Eccleſ. xi. 8.

rious, and Bleſſed State, and much to be deſired.

Here then the Royal Preachers Admonition, is alſo ſeaſonably to be applyed. *Rejoyce O Young Man in thy Youth, and let thy Heart chear thee in the Days of thy Youth, and walk in the Ways of thine Heart, and in the Sight of thine Eyes: but know, that for all theſe Things God will bring thee to Judgment.* That is, when no other Conſideration will Awaken the Senſual Man, or move the Voluptuous, from indulging himſelf in Love, and Wine, and Gay Delights: a ſerious Attention to his Latter End, and a due Regard to the Vengeance and Puniſhment hereafter to be inflicted, may prove an Effectual Reſtraint. The Happineſs of the Bleſſed will be ſo Excellent, and Tranſcendently great: that no Patience, no Pains, no Sufferings can ever be too much to attain it. And the Torments of the Wicked will be ſo exquiſitely Severe, and Smart; that the Pleaſures of this Life will never be thought a Sufficient Recompence for the Puniſhments, and Miſery then to be endured. Eccleſ. xi. 9.

And ſuch Conſiderations as theſe, one would expect ſhould the more effectually Prevail here: in that we ſee the Influence of them every Day in the affairs of the World. We ſee Men Univerſally engag'd in Buſineſs, and throng'd in Anxious and Vexatious Cares; for the ſake of that future Peace, and Eaſe, which they Hope to enjoy in the Fruits thereof. We ſee them Wearying themſelves with Labour; and Expoſing themſelves to Hardſhips and Dangers; croſſing the Sea, and changing Climates; removing from one Country to another; and Deſpiſing, both the Fatigue of Journeys, and the threatning Perils of Storms and Tempeſts, that often Deſtroy and Swallow up all at once: rather than to live at Home in Sloth and Want; and bear the Miſeries of contemptible Poverty, and the Reproaches of a Scanty Fortune. Now the ſame apprehenſions would in Religion alſo go a great Way to produce the ſame Effect. And Men would ſure be as Willing, and Ready to forego the Thin Shadows of Felicity that are to be found in a Debauch, and the ſhort, Tranſient, Unſatisfactory Delights

lights of a Vicious Life; if they did but firmly Believe, and ſeriouſly Conſider, that this their Wiſe Choice, and Religious Self-denial ſhall undoubtedly one Day be rewarded with Bliſs more Noble, and Pleaſures more Refined. They would not Scruple to bear all the ſevereſt Parts of Religion, and to endure all its Hardſhips, even under the moſt Grievous Characters that they ever find them repreſented: did they but ſeriouſly reflect, that by this their Chriſtian Patience; they ſhould inevitably be delivered from Eternal Torments with the Devil and his Angels; and dwell with God for ever.

It muſt then, ſure, proceed either from the groſs Inconſideration of Mankind, or from their too Low, Mean and Scanty Notions of theſe Rewards and Puniſhments, that they become not more Prevalent, and Effectual to reform them. And therefore I ſhall now attempt to give ſome Account of theſe Things, and fairly repreſenting them to Conſideration: leave every Man to Judge for himſelf, whether they will not in the end make out; that the Fear of the Lord is Mans Greateſt Wiſdom, and his Wiſeſt Choice. Now, 1. The

What Knowledge of our Future State by the Light of Nature.

1. The firſt thing that offers it ſelf to our Thonghts here, is an Obſervation evident to every common Underſtanding. For tho it muſt not be denied, that it depending wholly on the Will, and Wiſdom of God to Reward and Puniſh us, as ſhall be moſt for his Glory, we can know but very little what Bleſſings he will beſtow, or what Miſery he will Inflict; otherwiſe than as he ſhall Graciouſly Pleaſe, by Revelation, to diſcover them: yet this one thing the Light of Nature, and the Principles of Reaſon teach us; I mean, That the Happineſs or Miſery of the other World ſhall far Tranſcend any Felicity, or any Tribulations, that can befall us here. So that they who ſhall be Bleſſed in the Kingdom of God, ſhall be Bleſſed in ſuch Degree, as no Man ever on Earth was Bleſſed. And he that ſhall be condemned in the next World, ſhall be Condemned to ſuch Torments, as no Man on Earth ever felt. The Truth of this appears from the very Nature of Rewards and Puniſhments.

Future Rewards muſt exceed all Earthly Joys.

1. For Rewards, This very Name implies ſomewhat more than a bare Re-

Retaliation. This is the difference between a Debt and a Reward. The one ariſes out of ſtrict Juſtice; the other is in ſome ſenſe an Act of Grace. The one requires no more than what is ſtrictly Due, the other implies a more Abundant Compenſation. As for Inſtance; He that ſhall ſpend his Eſtate, or any conſiderable part of it in the Service of his Country; if his Country ſhall Repay juſt what he has loſt, and no more; they may be ſaid to have made him Satisfaction; but there muſt be ſomewhat added, before they can properly be ſaid to have Rewarded him. So is it in the Retribution of the Laſt Great Day; The Bleſſings that God has laid up for the Juſt, muſt exceed the Suffering and Hardſhips, and Difficulties they have Undergone, or it cannot properly be called a Reward. For this Expreſſion in the Common uſe of it ſuppoſes more than an Adequate, and Commenſurate Proportion to our Labour. So alſo,

2. For Puniſhment, This according to all the Notions, and Laws, and Cuſtoms of the World, implies a great

Vid. Gro. in Rom. 6. 23. *And Puniſhments all Earthly Miſeries.*

great deal more than a bare Satisfaction. Under the Law of *Moſes* he that had ſtolen any thing, was obliged to Reſtore it; but this was not all. He was to make Reſtitution as an Act of Juſtice to the Injured Perſon; but as a Puniſhment for his Fault, he was to reſtore Double. Nay if the Ox or Sheep ſtolen were Kild, or Sold; he was to *reſtore five Oxen for an Ox, and four Sheep for a Sheep.* I mention this Inſtance to ſhow, that the Nature of Puniſhments muſt ſuppoſe them to exceed an Adequate and Arithmetical Proportion to the Gain, or Profit of the Fault. And ſo will it certainly be in the Torments of the Wicked in the other World.

Exod. xxii, 1, 4,

And if this be ſo, Reaſon teaches by a juſt Conſequence, that the Condition of the Religious ſhall be Bleſſed and Happy in a moſt high Degree. Their Delights, their Joys, their Felicities, be they what they will, ſhall be Wonderfully, and Tranſcendently great. The Wiſe and Righteous Judge will not be ſcanty in his Compenſations: but Bountiful and Generous. His Reward ſhall am-

amply repay our Trouble; It ſhall abundantly exceed all the Joys and Delights that Sin could have afforded: and all the Difficulty and Hardſhip that Religion has given Men. They that are Happy ſhall be Greatly Happy; and the very Nature of Rewards muſt ſuppoſe all this.

So on the other Hand, they that are Miſerable ſhall be very Miſerable; Their Chaſtiſements ſhall be very Severe, their Torments Exquiſite and Grievous. They ſhall at laſt be forc'd to Lament, and Mourn, and Bewail their own Imprudence in their ſharpeſt Tortures. The Miſery and Anguiſh in the Puniſhment of Sin, ſhall Infinitely exceed the Delights and Deareſt Pleaſures of it. The very Nature of Puniſhment ſhews the Neceſſity of this.

What Proportion between the Pleaſures and Puniſhments of Sin.

And this, by the Way, may ſerve to ſhew us a little the Weakneſs of that Objection which ſome Men make, againſt what the Scripture reveals concerning the Future State of Wicked Men. Some pretend not to be ſatisfied with, nor in truth to give Credit to the Threatnings of the Goſpel: becauſe they know not how to think

think that God will puniſh the Small and Tranſient Pleaſures of Sin, with Pains ſo Terrible and Afflicting. *The Joys*, ſay they, *are but Imperfect and Short, and therefore why ſhould the Puniſhment be ſo Exquiſite, or ſo Durable, as Everlaſting Burnings?*

But this is a very weak Plea; for in all likelyhood it will be the Leaſt of Gods Inquiries what Benefits Men have had by their Iniquities. He will, moſt probably, leave it to them to Compute and Judge of the Fruits and Acqueſts of their Vices; when they ſee the Effects of them, and have the Torments that muſt enſue ready prepared to be put into the other Scale. But the Rules that God will Judge by, will be taken from the Hainouſneſs of Sins, and the Aggravating Circumſtances of them. There is no doubt but that Juſtice ſhall be obſerved; God will render to all Men according to the Good or Evil they have done, and no more in Puniſhments eſpecially. And ſo the Puniſhment ſhall bear Proportion to the Sins. But in this Proportion, Reſpect will not be had, ſo much to the Delights they have offered; as to the

the Blackneſs of the Crimes, and the Perverſeneſs of the Mind with which they are Commited; the Affront they have given to the Majeſty of God; and the Scandal they have been to his Providence, and Attributes.

If Regard were only to be had to the Pleaſures that Sin brings with it; there would be much leſs need of a Future Judgment than there is. For I cannot doubt, but that Generally Speaking, the Preſent Miſery of it is equal, and does frequently Exceed the Pleaſure. And if this were all the Buſineſs of Puniſhing; there would be ſo many Sins have their Reward here, that there would be much leſs Work to do at the Laſt Judgment, than we can now believe there is. But God has certainly other Ends to ſerve in that moſt ſolemn Trial of Wicked Men. He is to do Juſtice to himſelf, and to many of his Injured and Oppreſſed Servants. He has the Wiſdom of his Government, and the Goodneſs of his Providence to vindicate. He has his Glory to be conſulted, and his Holineſs to be approved, and moſt if not all his Attributes to be diſ-

diſplayed. And if either the Exquiſiteneſs, or the Eternity of their Torments be neceſſary to any of theſe Ends: it will be found agreeable to God, and Men have Reaſon to believe; that he will puniſh their unforsaken Sins, with ſuch Miſery as ſhall be both Exquiſite and Eternal: let the Pleaſures, or the Fruits of them be never ſo ſmall, or never ſo Tranſient.

But I ſhall have Occaſion to mention this again hereafter, and only move it now by the by, as agreeable to Reaſon as well as Revelation. And theſe General Notions alone, however worth our Obſervation, anſwer not fully the End propoſed. We muſt therefore make a more particular Search; and this can only be had from the Holy Oracles of God. And this is the

The Scripture Account of our Future Happineſs.

II. Second Thing, to be conſidered, *viz.* what Account the Goſpel gives us of the State of Mankind after Death. And here we find the Revelations of God's Word ſtrengthening the Authority of our Natural Notions, and confirming the Principles of Reaſon, and the Apprehenſions

prehenſions of our own Minds; and teaching us the more firmly to expect, that proportionably to the Difference in our Actions, there ſhall be a Difference in our Conditions alſo. For it expreſly declares, that there ſhall be two ſeveral Places, or States; One for Good Men which we call Heaven; The other for the Impenitent which we call Hell. Theſe are the two States that ſhall then Divide the World; and every Soul among us ſhall have his Share in One of them; and which that ſhall be, depends upon his own Choice, and the Actions of his Life.

Let us then conſider a little, and view each State apart; and ſee what manner of Felicity God has prepar'd for them that live well; and what kind of Torments Evil Men ſhall be Condemned to. For in the Greatneſs of theſe will chiefly lie the Perſwaſive Power of this Conſideration.

I ſhall begin with the Reward of the Righteous, and the Felicity of the Bleſſed. And,

1. The firſt thing that the Scripture teaches us here, ſerves chiefly to

check our Curioſity, and to make our Enquiries rather Uſeful and Profitable, than Nice and Scrupulous: in that it is not Solicitous to declare, in what the true Nature of that Felicity ſhall particularly conſiſt. But yet,

2. It has given us ſuch a Glorious Account and Deſcription of it, as cannot but raiſe in us Bright Ideas, and Noble Thoughts, and repreſent it as a State much to be Wiſh'd for, and earneſtly to be Deſired.

The Nature of it but imperfectly revealed.

1. Firſt I ſay, it is not Solicitous to Inform us in what the true Nature of the Felicities of the Bleſſed ſhall moſt particularly conſiſt. This the Apoſtle ingenuouſly confeſſes, *Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither have entred into the Heart of Man, the things which God hath prepar'd for them that love him. Now we know but in part; but then ſhall we know alſo as we are known.* Now we *ſee but as thro a Glaſs darkly*; by ſmall Glimpſes of a faint Light: in compariſon to the Glory that ſhall be revealed *when we ſhall be like him and ſee him as he is.* So that tho' Lovely things and Noble are ſpoken of this City of God: yet

1 Cor. 2. 9.

1 Cor. 13. 12.

1 Jo. 3. 2.

yet the Queen of *Sheba*'s Words may here fitly be applied; *that the Half has not been told us*, but the Delights and Joyful Bliſs of that happy place will infinitely *excell the Fame which we have heard.* 1 Kings 10.7

Indeed there is great Reaſon to put, as yet, a Vail before our Eyes, and great Wiſdom in not making the Diſcoveries more Particular and Expreſs; in that the Eſſence or Nature of that Happineſs is ſo far beyond our Capacities fully to comprehend: that the Myſteriouſneſs of what was to have been revealed, would in all likelyhood have prov'd a Stumbling-Block and an Offence; would have increaſed the Number of Unbelievers; and have given too plauſibe a pretence to Obſtinacy and Infidelity. We ſee this already in thoſe few Myſteries that we have in our Chriſtian Faith; With what obſtinacy are they oppoſed and diſputed againſt? How many cavil at the Incarnation of the Son of God, and the Reſurrection of the Body, and the Eternity of Torments? Had then thoſe Profound Myſteries of our Future State been all diſplayed before our dazled

Eyes; had thoſe things which it cannot *enter the Heart of Man to conceive*, been all mentioned: what Doubts? what Scruples? what Perplexities? And perhaps through the Difficulty of Underſtanding rightly the Nature of our Happineſs; we ſhould have Diſputed and Denied the Truth of it. And thereby inſtead of making us better Chriſtians, it might have made us the more Obſtinate in unbelief.

It was therefore an Act of great Wiſdom, and Goodneſs in God, conſidering the Vanity of Men, and the Levity of their Minds, not to make a more particular Revelation of theſe things to us. Eſpecially, when he has given us ſuch an Account as is ſufficiently inviting, and capable of engaging our Affections: tho not of ſatisfying our ſcrupulous Curioſity in all Philoſophical enquiries. For when the thing was too Great, too Lofty to be comprehended by our low Capacities: God has ſtooped down to our Underſtandings, and choſen to repreſent the Joys and Delights of Heaven, by ſuch Things as we Know and Prize, and

are

are Fond of. Not indeed by any ſuch Repreſentations, as may leave room to conceit its Pleaſures, like thoſe impure ones that now adminiſter Temptations to our Sins; But by almoſt all Things and all Delights, that are Innocent, and would not infect our Minds with Low, and Sordid, and Mean Apprehenſions of the Bliſſes. And therefore I added,

But ſufficient to encourage our Obedience:

2. *Secondly*, That though the Goſpel has not made ſuch a particular Revelation as our Curious Humours may expect: yet it has given us ſuch a Glorious Account and Deſcription of it, as raiſes Bright Ideas, and Noble Thoughts, and repreſents it as a State Juſtly to be valued, and earneſtly to be deſired. And this I think will ſufficiently be ſeen in theſe Reſpects.

In a Freedom from all Miſery and Sorrow.

I. That it Declares, and Proclaims in Heaven a perfect Exemption, and abſolute Immunity from all Miſery and Torment; from all Troubles and Vexations; from all Mourning and Tribulation whatſoever. And a total Deliverance from all Sorrow is, I am perſuaded, the firſt Eſſential Ingredient in all perfect Felicity. Thus

Rev. 7. 15, 16, 17. then it is deſcribed by St. *John*, *He that ſitteth on the Throne ſhall dwell among them; They ſhall Hunger no more, neither ſhall the Sun light on them, nor any Heat, for the Lamb which is on the midſt of the Throne ſhall feed them; and ſhall lead them unto Living Fountains of Waters: and God ſhall wipe away all Tears from their* Rev. 21. 4. *Eyes.* And again, *God himſelf ſhall be with them, and be their God, and he ſhall wipe away all Tears from their Eyes: and there ſhall be no more Death, neither Sorrow, nor Crying, neither ſhall there be any more Pain, for the former things are paſſed away.*

Theſe are the Grievances that perplex our preſent Life; but in Heaven they ſhall all ceaſe. There ſhall be no Poverty, nor Sickneſs, nor Shame, nor any other Afflictions. The Indigent and Needy Beggar ſhall there want no Alms; *for the Lamb in the midſt of the Throne ſhall feed him*; ſo that *he ſhall Hunger no more, nor Thirſt any more.* There ſhall be none Calamitous and Unfortunate; no outcries of Injured, and Oppreſſed Orphans; no Mournful and Diſtreſſed Widdows making heavy Lamentation.

Rev. 7. 17.

on. There ſhall be no Mourning for the Dead, no Afflicted Mother weeping for her deceaſed Children: For there they ſhall be raiſed to Life again, and God *ſhall wipe away all theſe Tears from their Eyes.* The Priſoner ſhall be releaſed; the Bondman ſhall be made Free, and the Captive ſet at Liberty. There ſhall be no Cares to diſtract our Minds, no Fears to diſturb our Peace; no Diſappointments to break our Reſt. No Envy, no Anger, no fretful Impatience, no galling Diſcontent, no Repining to perplex our Hearts, and diſcompoſe our Souls. In a Word; no Sorrow, no Crying, no Complaining, no Diſtreſs.

And how bleſſed a State this muſt be, from whence all Miſery is for ever baniſht; and into which Unhappineſs ſhall never enter: we may eaſily Conjecture from the value that Men would ſet on their preſent Joys, were they all thus Conſtant, and without any Mixture, or allay of Sorrow. This one would think then ſhould certainly engage, all that are now Afflicted and involved in Trouble: in that in this Happy Place they may

find Reſt and Peace, and everlaſting Comfort. All that wander about making loud complaints of ſevere Hardſhips, and think it much that they are not pitied according to their Mind; all that want Food and Raiment and the Juſt Conveniencies of Life: *here* may be fed, here may be provided for. All that languiſh upon their Beds, and Faint through the Wearineſs of their Fleſh, in the Anguiſh of their Pains, and Sickneſs: *here* ſhall find eaſe from that Divine Phyſician, that will effectually make them whole. All that are Injured, and Oppreſſed with Wrong; that are Deſolate and Deſtitute; that Mourn under Tribulations; and Lament, and Truckle under the weight of their Sorrows; whoſe Souls Bleed with Anguiſh, and whoſe Hearts are Sore with Sighing; that long for Death, and are become weary of a Life ſo void of Comforts: may flee to this Sanctuary, and *here* they may be ſafe. Keep Innocence, live Religiouſly, make your Intereſt ſtrong with God and Chriſt; ſecure your ſelves a glorious Reſurrection; and *you ſhall find Comfort and Reſt to your Souls*; and Trouble

Trouble and Mourning ſhall be done away.

But, that all our Apprehenſions of this Felicity may not be purely Negative, it is declared.

II. That we ſhall then live for ever in the Preſence of God, and in the bleſſed Fellowſhip of Saints and Angels. This is ſignified, Rev. 7. 15. *They are ever before the Throne of God, and ſerve him Day and Night in his Temple, and he that ſitteth on the Throne ſhall Dwell among them.* This indeed is here ſpoken of as a ſingular Favour vouchſafed to Martyrs; and a particular Recompence, intended for thoſe who have ſuffered for the Chriſtian Faith. But the Nature of our Felicity ſhall be all the ſame; however Different in Degree to them. And accordingly we find the ſame Holy Author ſpeaking, in another place, of the ſame thing in common to all other Righteous Men. *I heard a great Voice out of Heaven ſaying, Behold the Tabernacle of God is with Men, and he will dwell with them, and they ſhall be his People, and God himſelf ſhall be with them, and be their God.* Rev. 21. 3.

The Preſence and Viſion of God.

To

To the underſtanding of which Expreſſion we muſt remember, that the Tabernacle or Sanctuary among the Jews, was the place of God's more Immediate Preſence; where they were to offer their Sacrifices, and toward which they were to make their Prayers. When therefore the Scripture ſays, that in the World to come, *God's Tabernacle ſhall be with Men, and that he will dwell among them:* it muſt intend that he will receive us much nearer to himſelf, and to his more immediate Favour. So that we ſhall be with God, Happy in his own Love, and ſafe under his Protection. This St. *Paul* tells us, 2 *Theſ.* 4. 17. *That we ſhall be ever with the Lord.*

And this alſo ſeems to be the deſign of the Scripture when it ſays that we ſhall *ſee God.* *Bleſſed are the pure in Heart for they ſhall See God.* *And we ſhall be like unto him, for we ſhall See him as he is.* What the Holy Spirit of God particularly intended by both theſe Expreſſions, is I doubt too much a Myſtery to be accurately accounted for now. Some of the School Men place all the Felicity of

Mat. 5. 8.

1 John 3. 2.

it

it in an Intuitive Contemplation of the *Eſſence of God* as their Phraſe is, (*i. e.*) in a pure act of the Underſtanding, in a nearer Knowledge and Proſpect of God's Being and Preſence; and this by the Help and Benefit of Supernatural Light. But this, as moſt of the Notions of the Schools, is Abſtruſe, and Dark, and Precarious; and has more of Niceneſs, than of Solidity. There is no doubt, but that we ſhall have then a much better Knowledge, and clearer Underſtanding of God, than we can have now. Our Faculties will be ſo improved, that we ſhall doubtleſs ſee farther into, and diſcern more clearly the Divine Nature than now we can. And there is no doubt too, but that it will be a very Delightful thing, to Meditate and Reflect upon him. But to ſtand always muſing in a deep, and penſive Contemplation, does not ſeem to be the chief Employment for the Eternal Life of Creatures, that have ſeveral other Noble Faculties, as well as that of Underſtanding.

Others make this Beatific Viſion to conſiſt in an actual and clear Beholding

ing of the Glorious Majeſty of God; or of ſome Glorious Light and ſignal Splendor, in which God inhabits, and with which he is ſurrounded. But this as the former ſeems too much the Product of Humane Imagination, and founded upon no Authority of Scripture: the Word of God no where declaring after what manner he will exhibit himſelf to the View of Men. It ſeems therefore the moſt Eaſy and Unforced Interpretation of both theſe Expreſſions, to look on them as Metaphorical, and to underſtand by them either his peculiar Favour, Protection, and Love, under which we cannot but be Bleſſed and Safe: or elſe that more Perfect Knowledge of him, and that Compleater, and more Abundant Communication of his Divine Perfections, of which I intend to ſpeak in the following head. Be it what it will, it muſt include Excellent Delight, and Wonderful Felicity. God is the Fountain of all true Hapineſs and ſound Comforts; To ſee him is Glorious, and to be with him is Happineſs: for in *his Preſence is fulneſs of Joy, and at his Right Hand are Divine Pleaſures forevermore.*

And

And thus ſhall we be Bleſſed in the World to come, when we ſhall be admitted into his Preſence, to dwell in his Houſe, and as his Children and Servants familiarly to converſe with him. To be ſafe under his Protection, and evermore to rejoyce in his Favour. To have his Countenance always Gracious, and Propitious to us; always Kind, always Pleaſing, always atteſting his Love, and communicating his Bleſſings to us. And to be thus with God in Peace, to find him eternaly Reconciled to us for all our Indignities; to be free from Fears; free from Terrors; without any amazing Apprehenſions of his Wrath, and Vengeance, and Indignation: is a Bleſſing earneſtly to be deſired.

Then alſo ſhall be fulfilled Chriſt's Prediction among the Jews; that many ſhall come *from the Eaſt and Weſt, and ſhall ſit down with* Abraham, Iſaac, *and* Jacob, *in the Kingdom of God: They ſhall come unto mount* Sion, *and to the City of the Living God, the Heavenly* Jeruſalem; *and to an Innumerable company of Angels, and to the General Aſſembly of the Church of the firſt*

Mat. 8. 11.

Heb. 12. 22. 23.

firſt-born, which are written in Heaven; to God the Judge of all, and to the Spirits of Juſt Men made perfect. And there muſt be moſt Raviſhing and Exalted Delights in this Unanimous, and Bleſſed Society; In the agreeableneſs of their Perſons; in the Knowledge which they impart; in the Myſteries which they ſhall explain; in the Tranſactions that they ſhall relate; and in a free communication of their Thoughts and Conſolations. But moreover,

A Glorious Change in our Natures.

III. Beſides this, and all the external Glories of the Place; and the Unſpeakable Joys that we ſhall receive there in the Preſence of God: I cannot but think, that one great part of our Felicity will be found in the Glorious Change that ſhall then be made in our ſelves; and in the exalting theſe our Frail and Corruptible Natures to ſuch a pitch of Incorruptible Perfections: as muſt needs bring Wonderful and unexpreſſible Happineſs along with it.

In our Bodies.

For not to ſay much of our Bodies, it muſt yet be remembred, that Theſe alſo ſhall have ſome ſhare in the Advantages

vantages and Glories of that happy Change. Theſe frail Tabernacles of Fleſh, that are now a clog to us; Subject to ſo many Grievous Evils; that adminiſter ſuch dangerous Temptations here, and muſt at laſt become Meat for Worms, and moulder into Duſt and Putrefaction: Theſe, I ſay, at the Laſt Day ſhall be Glorified, and made Immortal. Thus St. *Paul* ſpeaks of them, *It is ſown in Corruption, it is raiſed in Incorruption; it is ſown in Diſhonour, it is raiſed in Glory; it is ſown in Weakneſs, it is raiſed in Power; it is ſown a natural Body, it is raiſed a Spiritual Body.* In which change there will be theſe wonderful Advantages. 1. That our Bodies ſhall not then be ſuſtained and kept alive, as now, by Food, and a daily ſupply of Meats; but by an *Incorruptible* Principle derived from the Spirit of God. So that we ſhall neither Hunger, nor Thirſt, nor Want; There will be neither Cold, nor Surfeits, nor Diſtempers, nor Death. 2. They ſhall be *Spiritual* Bodies; without any Proneneſs to Sin; or Principles of Diſſolution; without any vicious Appetites, or Looſe Deſires; and deſtitute

1 Cor. 15. 42, 43.

deſtitute of all diſorderly Paſſions and Affections. And Laſtly; They ſhall be *raiſed in Power* and Strength; with Vigour and a lively Proweſs; without either Sickneſs, Wearineſs, or Pain.

But though theſe things go a great way to make up that exemption from Miſery and Sorrow of whichwe ſpoke above, and are not to be deſpiſed: yet they are far ſhort of that Bliſs and Joy, and great Delight which reſult from the nobler Enlargements of the Soul. From Sanctified and Pure Affections; and an Improved Knowledge, and an enlightened Underſtanding.

Our Underſtandings enlightened and enlarged.

Indeed, tho I cannot go ſo far with the Schoolmen as to place all the Felicity of the Bleſſed in mere Intuitive Contemplations: yet the Underſtanding has without Doubt its peculiar Delights. And the unfolding dark Myſteries; and finding out a Series of Long hidden Things: is as much a Pleaſure to the Mind, as any Proſpect to the Eye, or any Harmony to the Ears. The Irkſom Fatigue of ſome Mens Labours; the hot Contentious Diſputes; the fierce

Zeal

Zeal in the Defence of Truth, and of the Knowledge of it; plainly ſhow how Great and Valuable a Delight it is. But alas, while we live here, there are too many Miſts before our Eyes: we are blinded by Ignorance, and Intereſt, and Prejudice and Faction. We weary our Souls in the Dark, or to ſpeak in the Apoſtles Phraſe; *We know but in part*, and in many things at beſt make but Good Conjectures. *Now we ſee things but darkly as thro a Glaſs:* in Riddles and Types, and Shaddows, and Figures of reſemblance only. Now things are communicated to us in Figurative and Borrowed Phraſes, and by Indiſtinct Alluſions to things of this lower Orb. But then, the vail ſhall be taken away, and *we ſhall ſee Face to Face*, and behold the proper Images of things. *Now we know but in part, but then ſhall we know*, the Nature, Attributes, and Councels of God, *as we alſo are known by him.* 1 Cor. 13.12.

Here therefore God invites all the Learned, and the Wiſe, who dig for Knowledge as for hidden Treaſures, and waſt their Lamps in the Conſtant watchful Search of it. How

Delightful and Pleaſing a Bleſſing will it be; to have all the hidden and Abſtruſe Intricacies in the Decrees and Actions of God, and in the Order and Nature of things; all thoſe Difficulties that amaze the Untaught, and confound the Wiſeſt; that Trouble, and Perplex the Pulpit, and the Preſs; and breed ſuch eager and warm Debates: at laſt determined to our Hands; laid Naked, and Open before us, and become Eaſy, and Plain, and Intelligible to the Meaneſt? How Tranſporting a Joy will it be, to become Learned without Labour; and Wiſe and Knowing even beyond the Graveſt Sages, and Philoſophers of the World, without that cloſe Confinement to the Study, and that Irkſom Labour among Books; which exhauſts the Spirits, and is a great Wearineſs to the Fleſh? To have thoſe Glorious Myſteries, that even *the Angels have deſired to pry into*, made plain, and expounded to us all. So that all Diſputes ſhall ceaſe, and all Parties be reconciled. In a Word, to have all the the Noble Faculties of our Heaven-born Souls improved; our Un-

1 Pet. 1. 12.

Underſtandings clear'd; our Minds enlightened; our Reaſon enlarged, and reſtored to its full Perfection? To have our Thoughts all enricht with vaſt Treaſures of Knowledge and Wiſdom: and *we all with Open Face to behold the Glories of the Lord, and to be changed into the ſame Image with him, from Glory to Glory.* 2 Cor. 3. 18.

A Participation of the Divine Nature.

Which laſt Words bring to my Mind, that, which if I was to indulge my Thoughts without Cenſure, I take to be the Prime Excellency of our Future Glory and Felicity. I mean, that beſides the Glories of the Place; and an Everlaſting Communion with God and his Holy Angels: we ſhall as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, *be changed into the ſame Image* with God; or as St. *Peter*, we ſhall *be made Partakers of the Divine Nature*, and have Glorious Rayes of the Divine Attributes and Perfections of our God largely, and plentifully communicated to us. In what Reſpects, and after what Manner this Bleſſed Participation ſhall be, is as yet a Myſtery to us, while the Vail of Mortal Fleſh is held before our Eyes. So that at preſent we muſt be content to 2 Pet. 1. 4.

Walk by Faith, and not by Sight; and reſt ſatisfied with ſuch ſhort Hints of Divine Revelation, and ſuch ſmall Glimpſes of Light; as God has thought fit to hold forth to us: rather than by any vain Attempts in Explaining, and giving an Account of it; to expoſe it to raſh Cenſures, and Malicious Objections, and to leſſen its Eſteem, and Credit.

Only, to ſhew, that this is not a mere Conceit, or Imagination of my own Brain; but a Doctrine Founded on the Authority of the Goſpel: I ſhall offer one or two Brief Reflections to Strengthen this Opinion. As

1. I would obſerve that Man was in the Beginning Created much more after the Image of God, and with Larger, and Stronger Impreſſes of the Divine Perfections than he now poſſeſſes in this State of Apoſtacy and Sin. It is evident by what I have ſaid already that by this *Image of God* I do not Underſtand now, that Dominion only which is given us over all Earthly Creatures: but the Better Principle of Wiſdom, and Righteouſneſs, and Holineſs; in which, in Truth, we more properly re-

reſemble the moſt Glorious Perfections of the Divine Nature; and moſt to the promoting of our own Felicity and Bliſs.

And that Man was thus Gloriouſly, and Happily created at the firſt will I think be Evident from hence.

1. That he was then enabled to live in that Complete, Entire, and Conſtant Obedience to God's Will, with abſolute Perfection, and without any Sin: which we now are not. And ſuch large Capacities, and Spiritual Powers could not be without much greater and nobler Perfections than we now Poſſeſs.

2. As Man was then without Sin; ſo was he without any Miſery alſo; and had his Happineſs as perfect as his Innocence. And this Remark, that the Completeneſs of our Felicity was Continued and Loſt with that more exalted State of Humane Nature in which our Holineſs was Perfect: may help not only to convince us of the unalienable Alliance, and Relation which there is, between Holineſs and Happineſs: but alſo, to make us ſenſible, that the chief Excellency and Eſſence of our Celeſ-

tial Bliſs will conſiſt in, and Reſult from this our Reſemblance of God, and the Bleſſed Impreſſes, and Communications that he ſhall then make. But then

2. As Man was Originally created more Perfect, and became thus Degenerated by Sin; ſo the Deſign of the Chriſtian Religion is to reſtore that Divine Image of the Almighty in us. Thus the Apoſtle ſpeaks, *Col.* 3. 10. *We have put on the new Man, which is Renewed in Knowledge after the Image of him that created him.* In which Place he plainly alludes to that Divine Image of God, after which Man was originally created. And as he tells us expreſly, that this by Chriſt, and his Goſpel is to be renewed in us: he in ſo doing manifeſtly confirms, that we were once poſſeſs'd of that Reſemblance, and loſt it by Iniquity. But then

3. Tho' this Divine Image is renewed by Chriſt yet the complete Reſtoration of it is but begun in this Life, and ſhall not be in its True and Abſolute Perfection: till our Reſurrection from the Dead, and our Entrance upon another State. The Truth

Truth of this is undeniably Evident from hence; that we have not now the Power and Perfect Capacity of doing Good, and living abſolutely without Sin, which Mankind at the firſt Creation had. For, had we the ſame Powers, and large Meaſures of Divine Qualities: they would doubtleſs in ſome remarkable Inſtances or other produce the ſame Effects. But inſtead of hoping for, and expecting this; the Holy Scripture plainly intimates, that in many things we offend all, and the Completion of this Divine Reſemblance in us; is to be the Glory of the other World, and the Recompence of our preſent Attempts and Endeavours to gain them here. Thus St. *Peter* in the Words before cited, *By the Knowledge of Chriſt are given to us exceeding Great and Precious Promiſes; that by theſe we might be made Partakers of the Divine Nature; having eſcap'd the Corruptions that are in the World thro Luſt.* 2 Pet. 1. 4. The one is our Duty, the other our Reward. And when St. *Paul* would ſet forth the Excellency of the Goſpel, above the Law of *Moſes*: he urges this very Conſideration, that

it Prepares us for ſuch a State, in
2 Cor. 3. 18. which *we all with open Face viewing, and attentively obſerving, as in a Glaſs the Glory of the Lord, are changed into the ſame Image with him, from Glory to Glory.* To be chang'd into the ſame Image with Chriſt, and to be made Partakers of his Divine Nature as he has aſſumed our Fleſh, in a more Glorious Manner than ever Mankind did partake it here on Earth: this ſeems to conſtitute the Eſſence and Excellency of our Eternal Felicity.

And tho as to the Nature, and Manner, and Circumſtances of that Change we muſt be content, as I ſaid before, to be Ignorant, till the Revelation of all Things: yet when we conſider God as the Fountain of all Solid and Certain Happineſs; becauſe in him all the *Fulneſs of Perfections dwell*; and therefore Infinitely and Eternally Happy, becauſe Infinitely and Externally Perfect: we may eaſily perceive, that in a Participation of his Celeſtial Nature we ſhall largely partake of his Celeſtial Glories too; and in receiving the Deep and Everlaſting Impreſſes of his

his Divine Image; we cannot but be Unſpeakably and Everlaſtingly Bleſſed therein; cannot but be Happy as he is Happy: in being Holy as he is Holy; and Wiſe as he is Wiſe; and Pure as he is Pure.

And O Bleſſed Day! when our Souls ſhall be thus enlightened with the Bright Rays of Divinity it ſelf; and we ſhall *ſhine like the Sun* for Splendor, in the Glories of the Father. When that Son of God, who once with admirable Condeſcention ſtoop'd down ſo low as to take upon him our Fleſh: ſhall with a more ſtupendious Act of Grace aſſume us to himſelf, to be Partakers of his Divinity, and Transformed into the ſame Image and Likeneſs with himſelf. When he ſhall vouchſafe us ſuch large Communications of his own Divine and Glorious Perfections, as ſhall be a ſure Foundation to us of everlaſting Reſt, and Joy, and Peace, and Comfort. Of Delights unexpreſſible, and ſuch Refined Pleaſures, as Man can now form but very Lame Conceptions of. And oh how does it concern us, and how will it be our Wiſdom and our Eternal Praiſe: by a zealous

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Imitation of God and Chriſt in This Life; to Aſpire towards, and labour to Prepare our ſelves for ſo Signal a Favour, ſo Tranſcendent a Felicity. For the more we Imitate and Reſemble God in the Divine Qualifications of our Mind, and the Holineſs of our Actions: the ſurer ſhall we be to attain this Bliſs, and the nearer ſhall we approach towards the Infinite Happineſs of God himſelf.

'Tis true, the Bliſs is too Sublime for our preſent Comprehenſion, and it may be, this is one Reaſon; why the Revelation of it does no more affect us. But then to make up for this, Conſider,

IV. That God has favourably condeſcended to our Capacities; and ſet it out to us by the Compariſon and Repreſentation of ſuch Things as we know and admire, and take Delight in. Sometimes it is repreſented to us under the Notion of a Kingdom, and Chriſt calls it the *Kingdom of Heaven.*

Luke 12. 32. *Fear not little Flock for it is your Father's good Pleaſure to give you the King-*

Mat. 25. 34. *dom.* And again, *Come ye Bleſſed of*

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my Father inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the World. And St. *John* tells us, that we ſhall all be made *Kings and Prieſts unto God, and his Father.* Rev. 1. 6.

Here then he invites all thoſe Noble and Generous Minds, that are ambitious of Honour, and aſpire after Greatneſs. Here we may be all Kings and inherit a Kingdom, that is ſubject to no Change or Revolutions; a Crown that will ſit faſt; Diadems that will never Wither; and Glory that will never fade. Let Religion then be your care, and proportionably to your Virtues, you ſhall be Great, and exalted to high Honour. Honour that will never be envied, unleſs by the Fiends of Hell; Who ſhall then be at too great a Diſtance to affect us. Renown and Praiſe that will not conſiſt in empty Titles: but make us truly Great. Here the *Righteous ſhall Shine like the Sun in the Firmament*, with clear Light and Refulgent Splendor. Mat. 13. 43.

Sometimes it is repreſented to us as a place of Pleaſure and Delights. *In thy preſence is fulneſs of Joy, and at thy right hand there are Pleaſures for ever-* Pſal. 16. 11.

Pſal. 27. 8, 9. *evermore.* And, *Thou ſhalt make them drink of the River of thy Pleaſures, for with thee is a Fountain of Life, and in thy Light ſhall we ſee Light,* by Light underſtanding Joy. And accordingly the Apoſtle writes, of *Joy*
1 Pet. 1. 8. Tit. 4. 13. *unſpeakable, and full of Glory,* and *of rejoycing with exceeding great Joy.* And
Rev. 14. 2, 3 thus St. *John* heard in a Viſion, *the Voice or Sound of Harpers ſinging with their Harps. And they ſung as it were a New Song before the Throne. I heard as it was the Voice of a great Multitude, and as the Voice of many Waters, and as the Voice of many Thunderings:* In which Words are repreſented the Number of the Choir, and the Loudneſs of their Praiſes, for
Rev. 19. 6, 7, 9. they ſang; *ſaying Allelujah, For the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, let us be Glad, and Rejoyce, and give Honor to him: for the Marriage of the Lamb is come, and he ſaith unto me Write, Bleſſed are they that are called unto the Marriage of the Lamb.* Here we have the Joys of Heaven repreſented under the reſemblance of a Feaſt, and ſuch an one as is uſually fulleſt of Delight and Pleaſures. And there is no doubt but that God by theſe

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Expreſſions Intended and Deſigned to repreſent to us, the Peace and ſound Contentment, the Solid and Subſtantial Joys of that Happineſs. And by this he calls all thoſe that are Lovers of themſelves, and fond of Pleaſures; that long for Delights, and thirſt after Eaſe, and Study always to divert themſelves. Here they have Joys worth their Labour, and Purſuit, *Fulneſs of Joy, and a River of Pleaſures.* Delights that ſhall be as much greater, and more Satisfactory than the preſent; as they are more Spiritual and Divine; and Pleaſures that ſhall be ſo much the more Grateful, by how much they are more Innocent: *Ho every one that thirſteth come* ye to theſe *Waters, and drink*, for here is the Fountain of Life and Joy.

Again, To charm the Worldly minded, and him whoſe Heart is ſet on Wealth; the Holy Scripture ſometimes compares our future Glory unto Treaſures. Particularly, *Lay not up for your ſelves Treaſures upon Earth, where Moth and Ruſt doth Corrupt, and where Thieves break through and Steal: but lay up for your ſelves Treaſure* Mat. 6. 19.

ſure in Heaven: where Moth and Ruſt doth not Corrupt, and where Thieves do not break through and Steal. Luk. 12. 33. *Provide for your ſelves Bags which wax not old, a Treaſure in Heaven which faileth not, where no Thief approacheth nor the Moth Corrupteth.* Thus when the Glories of this Celeſtial Kingdom are either too myſterious to be underſtood, or too Spiritual to affect our Hearts: God of his wonderful Compaſſion has ſtooped down, and Speaks to us in our own Language, and repreſents the Bleſſings after the Manner, and in the Expreſſions of Men; under ſuch Alluſions as we both know and prize, and ſuch as he who beſt underſtands our Hearts, finds moſt likely to raiſe our Admiration and our Love. By ſuch Compariſons, and Characters as ſhow, that he has Felicities for us all, and that will ſuit all variety of Tempers.

In a Word, God does not intend by theſe Characters, that the Nature of that Happineſs is ſuch, as ſhall anſwer the Preſent Deſires of the Ambitious, the Covetous, and the Voluptuous: but that it contains all

all that Abundant, Complete, and Univerſal Good, which Divine Celeſtial Minds can wiſh for, and Deſire, or take Delight in. And when that is ſaid, what can be added more to recommend it? There remains nothing then, but from hence to obſerve

V. *Laſtly*; Some particular Circumſtances, and Properties of this Felicity, that mightily enhance its Worth. And they are theſe.

1. That there ſhall be no Intermixture or Interruption of our Bliſs by any Croſſes and Troubles. The Truth of this we have ſeen already. It was the firſt thing mentioned in the Nature of our future Bliſs: that there would be a total exemption from all affliction. I mention this now only as an Evidence, how far our Felicity in Heaven ſhall in this thing alone excel all that we can find on Earth. *The Happineſs ſhall be Perfect and Complete.*

Here let a Mans Condition be never ſo Favourable and Advantageous; yet he has always ſome Vexations attending it. There are no Circumſtances ſo ſingular, but that there

there remains always ſomething to be complained of. If a Man abound in Wealth, yet it may be we find him, as Rich *Cræſus* was, Mourning for his Dead Son, and bewailing the Loſs of his Children. It was the ſaying of *Solon*, that as no one Country produces all kinds of Fruit, ſo no Condition of Life contains a full, and compleat Perfection of Comforts and Bleſſings. The fineſt Metal muſt have ſome allay. Some croſs Event, ſome unlucky Accident always intervenes to vex and diſappoint us. Whereas the Bliſs of Heaven ſhall be complete in all Degrees, and without all intermixture.

Satisfactory. 2. Another Property is, that our Happineſs ſhall yield us true Contentment and Satisfaction; So that we ſhall Joyfully acquieſce in it, without any new Longings, and impatient Deſires not yet anſwered. And in this alſo it excels the preſent. For here there is ſcarce one Man in a Thouſand whoſe Condition yields him that complete Felicity; that he neither Wants nor Deſires more. In truth, our Neceſſities are many, and though we poſſeſs many Bleſ-

Bleſſings yet we may want ſome. Again our Deſires are more Numerous, and we may in ſome ſenſe be ſaid to Want every thing we Wiſh for. But which is worſt of all; there is not the true Satisfaction which we Expected, to be met with in our Enjoyments. The very Delights of this Life, and eſpecially of Sin, Weary and Fatigue us; and like an over full Stomach rather Load than Nouriſh. Be a Proſpect or Picture never ſo curious; adorn'd with the greateſt Gaiety, and Variety of Colours; or be the Harmony of Muſick never ſo ſweet and raviſhing; yet *The Eye is not ſatisfied with Seeing, nor the Ear with hearing.* They may be diverted for a while: but they will Faint at laſt and Languiſh; beg a Ceſſation, and deſire Reſt. So is it in all the ſenſual Delights of the World; when we want nothing elſe, we want Variety, and long for a diverting Change. Eccleſ. 1. 8.

For this Reaſon it is, that we find ſometimes the Grandees of the World, put off their Robes, lay by their Purple, and their State, and divert themſelves with the Plainer *Hor. L. 3. 29.* Plerumq; gratæ divitibus vices, Mundæq; parvo ſub-lare pauperum cœnæ, ſine aulæis & oſtro, &c.

Entertainments of thoſe of a lower Rank, with leſs Dainty and leſs Pomp.

But in Heaven there ſhall be none of this Wearineſs, or this longing for Variety and Change; but true Contentment and perfect Satisfaction; Freſh Springs of new Delights ever riſing up to our Souls, that feed on their Sweetneſs to the Full. Thus the Prophetic Spirit of the Royal Prophet has deſcribed them. *I ſhall behold thy Preſence in Righteouſneſs, and when I awake up after thy Likeneſs, I ſhall be ſatisfied with it.* But

Pſ. 17. 15.

Eternal.

3. Another Property, and a very valuable one, is that the Felicity of Heaven is Everlaſting, and Perpetual, and ſhall have no End. Thus it is all along in the New Teſtament deſcribed. *The Righteous ſhall go away into Life Eternal. God ſo loved the World that he gave his only begotten Son; that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not Periſh but have Everlaſting Life.* So our Saviour ſpeaks of *everlaſting Habitations.* And St. *Paul* of an *Exceeding and Eternal weight of Glory. And a Building of God Eternal in the Heavens.* And again, *The*

Mat. 25. 46.
Joh. 3. 16.
Luk. 16. 9.
2 Cor. 9. 17.
2 Cor. 5. 1.
Rev. 22 5.

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Servants of God are ſaid to Reign with God for ever and ever. And how Bleſſed a thing muſt it be, to Reign with God *for ever and ever*; and to be Happy without end, and beyond all Compaſs of time? I ſhall not, I dare not attempt any Amplification on this Subject. This one Word *Eternity* carries more force than any other can add unto it. And the greater the Happineſs is in it ſelf, the more does this Property recommend it. Felicities ſo valuable and Joys ſo tranſcending one cannot but wiſh they ſhould continue for ever. The very Thought that our Happineſs ſhould at laſt expire, tho after many diſtant Ages: would derogate from the Greatneſs of it, and all ſuch Apprehenſions diminiſh our Satisfaction. It is the deſire of Everlaſting Happineſs and Eternal Bliſs that makes the deep Impreſſion on us.

The Application of all this.

And ſuch as this is to be the Happineſs of the Righteous in the World to come; and we are now to conſider, whether this be not a Reaſonable and Forceable Motive to Religion. Happineſs is commonly acknowledged to have mighty Charms,

and the Deſire of it to ſway the whole Race of us. That which the Great Man propoſes by his Honour; the Rich by his full Bags; the Voluptuous by his Pleaſure, and even the Sinner by his Sins; is only to be Happy.

And if ſo, one would expect, that that which bids the Greateſt, the moſt Laſting, the moſt Satisfactory, and the moſt Valuable Bliſs, ſhould ſooneſt make us Proſelites. And nothing can Vindicate the Wiſdom of a Wicked Life, but its aſſuring us of greater Felicities, than Religion can.

Speak then Sinner is it ſo? Are the ſweeteſt Pleaſures of a ſenſual Debauch equal to thoſe of dwelling continually with God? Do you know how Happy God is, or how Happy they are who dwell with him? Can you think that Love, and Wine, and the beſt Good Fellowſhip at the Bottle can make you as happy as the Angels, or as Happy as you would be, to be with Angels? Is the Favour of an Earthly Prince as valuable as the Favour of the Almighty? Or the Honour which Men beſtow to

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be compared with the Dignity of Reigning with God; and having on your Head a Crown of Glory that will never fade? No Man ſure is ſo far degenerated from the Principles of our Nature, as to think they be. Why then do you eagerly hunt after theſe Tranſient and Meaner Joys: to neglect thoſe that are more Excellent and more Precious? Look up to the Glory that is ſet before you; to dwell with God, and to be made like unto God; to be Happy as God is Happy, and Immortal as God is Immortal: how does it raiſe and tranſport our Souls? What can the whole World offer, that is fit to be put into the Ballance againſt this Felicity?

Speak Sinners, is there any ſuch Thing to be found? Have you yet known any Bleſſings upon Earth that will keep you from all Trouble; that will ſatisfy all your Wants and Deſires; that you *ſhall Hunger no more; nor Thirſt any more?* That will exempt you from all Afflictions; and fill you full of Joy, in which you ſhall Acquieſce, and Wiſh no more for ever? That will effectually ſecure

you from being Sick, and Poor, and Uneaſy, and in Anguiſh? Tell us plainly: have you any Pleaſures, any Comforts that ſhall be Everlaſting, that ſhall be Conſtant and Permanent; that ſhall neither Change nor Die; that ſhall be Immortal as the Soul, and valuable as Heaven? If you have, you Juſtify the Wiſdom of your Choice; Make this appear, and we'll no longer ſolicit you with theſe Intreaties. Show where ſuch Happineſs is to be found, and we'll all with one Conſent perſue it.

But certainly they muſt not be the Pleaſures of Sin; *for theſe endure but for a Seaſon.* Theſe are Short and Fading, and ſubject to be attended with Anguiſh and Remorſe, and the ſharp Convictions of a Guilty Conſcience. Theſe always expoſe Men to, and often bring upon them Poverty, and Sickneſs, and Shame, and Reproach, and every thing that can afflict us. And theſe cannot be Imortal ſince the *Wages* thereof are expreſly declar'd to be *Death.* Make then the moſt of the Pleaſures of a Wicked Life you can, ſay what can be ſaid in their Defence; which in truth is

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but very little; but let them be as Great as poſſible in your Opinion and Eſteem: yet ſure Heaven is a more Happy place, and its Delights infinitely to be preferr'd before them. And if they are, remember the Advice of an Honeſt Heathen. *If theſe Earthly Things are ſo ſmall; deſpiſe them and aim at Heaven. Hæc Cæleſtia ſemper ſpectato; Illa Humana contemnito.* For as in Torments the leaſt is to be choſen, ſo in Bleſſings one would chuſe the Greateſt. Cicer. Somn. Scip.

Theſe are the certain Principles of Reaſon, and agreeable to our Minds, and ſuch Rules as Mankind are generally govern'd by in all the wiſer Actions of their Lives. How comes it then to paſs, that in Religion only, where Reaſon ſhould have the Greateſt, it is commonly found to have the leaſt ſucceſs. Has the Kingdom of Heaven no Charms? Can we have the Proſpect of a State ſo Glorious, ſo tranſcendently Glorious and Bleſſed: and not aſpire towards it, but paſs it by with a wild Indifference, and cold Neglect, as a thing of no Worth? We, who pretend above all things to Happineſs; and hunt every Shadow, eve-

ry Reſemblance of it: can we ſee Eternal Felicity and Diadems of Celeſtial Glory, and be unaffected at them? When we come to appear before the terrible Judgment of God, and find others invited and called up;

Mat. 25. 34. *Come ye Bleſſed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you; and enter into the Joy of your Lord:* Speak freely; will it not Grieve your Souls, to be Rejected, and thruſt away with Scorn and Anger? But, wretched Man, if thou doſt not by a due and early Care Prevent it now, this muſt one Day be your Caſe. And you ſhall then confeſs, that Heaven is a Bleſſed place, and they both Wiſe and Happy that inherit it. Then you ſhall with all the ardent Powers of a Diſtreſſed, Guilty, and Afflicted Spirit long to be admitted. But if you have not ſecur'd your ſelf a Title to it, by the virtuous Actions of a Chriſtian Life now: it will be then in vain. For when that

Mat. 25. 10. Day comes *the Bridegroom is entred, and the Door is ſhut.* And what Confuſion will then ſit upon your Faces? With what Aſtoniſh'd Countenances ſhall ye Condemn and Curſe your

your own ill choſen Liberty; and unconfin'd Licentiouſneſs: when ye ſhall behold thoſe whom ye once called Silly Creatures, and thought Unwiſe and Fooliſh in being reſtrain'd and living by Goſpel Laws; to be at laſt received into the Kingdom of God, and *you your ſelves thruſt out?* Luk. 13. 28.

What ſtrange Infatuating Charms then has Sin? Or rather what ſtrange Infatuation, what Sottiſh Stupidity, and unaccountable Folly is Man guilty of; that for the ſake of Sin, whoſe Allurements are Treacherous, and whoſe Delights Falſe, Deceitful and Pernicious: will loſe Felicity ſo Valuable, and Joys ſo Glorious? Learn, for Heavens ſake to break it off, and caſt its Cords from you. Make your Peace with God in time, and Humble your ſelves before him by true Repentance. Let his Will, and the Precepts of his Goſpel be the Rule of your Actions, and of all your Converſation, Whatever that Forbids, avoid: whatever that enjoyns, Strictly and Zealouſly Obſerve: and let no Hardſhips, no Difficulties affright you. 'Twill in time grow Pleaſant; and

your

Gal. 6. 9. *your Labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord.* For *in due ſeaſon if ye faint not*, ye ſhall reap the Reward: and when *Chriſt who is your Life ſhall appear, then ſhall ye alſo appear with him in Glory.*

CHAP. VI.

The Miſeries of the Damned.

The Fear of Damnation the moſt Preſſing Motive to Repentance.

THere remains now but one Conſideration more to diſſwade Men from a Wicked Life, and to engage them to be Zealous in Religion. And that is taken from the Miſeries of the Damned, and the Severe, and Terrible Vengeance that God will one Day Execute, upon all thoſe that have been called to Repentance, and invited to work out their own Salvation; but Obſtinately and Impiouſly diſdained to return. God, of that Great Clemency, and Paternal Goodneſs which are peculiar to himſelf, uſes firſt Gentle and Mild Perſwaſions, and as the Prophets Expreſſion is, is willing *to draw us with the Cords of a*

Heb. 11. 4.

Man,

Man, and with the Bands of Love; the Force of Reaſon, and the Principles of Duty. But he too well knew the Naughtineſs and Folly of Mankind; the Hardneſs of their Hearts, and the Perverſeneſs of their Spirits to reſt here; and to imagine, that theſe alone would prove Succeſsful. He foreſaw, and he quickly found, that the moſt valuable Felicities would be deſpiſed, when violent Luſts prompt Men, or outragious Paſſions tranſport them. And as Tranſcendently great, as the Pure, Everlaſting Joys of Heaven are; yet there are too many ſuch Raſh, Inconſiderate, Wretched Creatures upon Earth: as would be content to loſe them all, for the ſordid Pleaſures of a vile Debauch, if there was nothing worſe to follow them.

For this Reaſon that Wiſe and Good God, who always Conſiders and Provides for the Neceſſities of his Creatures; that there might be no defect in his Care to reſtrain Sinners: has prepared an Hell for the Wicked; and Threatened *Tribulation and Anguiſh*; *Indignation, and Wrath upon every Soul of Man that doth evil.* Rom. 2. 9. He has threatned, did I ſay: nay he has

has Determined, and Irrevocably, and from all Eternity Decreed: that Mat. 25. 46. *as the Righteous ſhall go into Everlaſting Life*; ſo ſhall the Wicked into everlaſting Fire.

And as he uſes this as the laſt of all Inducements to Obedience; ſo it is particularly calculated for the Hardy Temper of thoſe ſtubborn Souls: who have neither Wiſdom nor Ingenuity to be moved by ſofter Methods. And what thoſe ſmart and exquiſite Torments are, which he has thus decreed to inflict upon ſuch Sinners is now to be conſidered.

Hell a Place of exquiſite Torment.

And here the firſt General Notion that offers it ſelf to our Thoughts, is ſo Calamitous and Deplorable: that Methinks if Men would but carefully attend to it; it has force enough to Allarm, and Terrify, and Soften, and Reclaim the Hardeſt Heart on Earth. For as Heaven is certainly a place of Eternal Glory, and Unſpeakable Delight: ſo Hell, whatever the Puniſhments of it may conſiſt in, is moſt certainly a Place of extream Miſery, Everlaſting Diſtreſs, Confuſion, and Woe. As Heaven will admit of no Afflictions, ſo Hell will admit of no Comforts. This

This the Scripture has plainly taught us, when it repreſents it as a place full of Mourning and Sorrowful Lamentation; declaring that there ſhall be conſtant *Weeping and Gnaſhing of Teeth.* And theſe things we know to be the Tokens of Miſery, and the conſtant inſeparable Companions of Doleful Calamities, and Inſupportable Griefs. Indeed, the account that the New Teſtament all along gives us of the Place of Torments cannot leave us room to expect any better Uſage or Entertainment in it. For it repreſents it to us under theſe Characters, Mat. 22. 13 Mat. 25. 30

I. It tells us that Impenitent Sinners ſhall be eternally baniſhed from God, *Baniſhment from God.*

Depart from me, we find an Emphatic part of that deplorable Sentence. Mat. 7. 23. Mat. 25. 41. And St. *Paul* tells us, *The Lord Jeſus ſhall be revealed from Heaven, with his Mighty Angels, in flaming Fire, taking Vengeance on them who know not God, and obey not the Goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall be Puniſhed with everlaſting Deſtruction, from the Preſence of the Lord, and the Glory of his Power.* 2 Theſ. 1. 7, 8, 9. And tho' perhaps at firſt, This

This may be thought no great Affliction, to the Men that now Dread, and Think it a Torment to approach him: yet when it ſhall be conſider'd, that God is the ſole Fountain of all true Delights, and Happineſs; and that for this Reaſon they that are with him cannot but be Happy: it will be eaſy to apprehend; that where God is not, there can be no Felicity. They that are baniſhed from his Preſence, muſt be robb'd of all Pleaſure, and Conſolation; as Naturally, and as Neceſſarily, as they muſt be confin'd to Darkneſs, and Eternal Night, that never ſee the Sun.

I was once thinking to have repreſented this by the Baniſhment of a tender Child from the Preſence of his beloved Parents; or of a Faithful and Affectionate Subject from the Favour of his endeared Prince; where his Intereſt was Powerful, and his Delight Proportionable. But the Reſemblance is too low, and much too faint. I was then deſigning to have compared it to the Mourning of a ſofter Mother; weeping for the abſence of a Deceaſed Infant, or if there

there be any thing in Nature, where the violence of Love, and the Abſence of the Thing beloved make our Deſires more Vehement and Strong. But alaſs each compariſon falls infinitely too Low. Only let me ſay in a Word, that if vehement Affections, and Impatient Deſires of what could not be obtained, have ever afflicted Diſtreſſed and Unhappy Men: unſpeakably Greater, and Infinitely ſurpaſſing this, beyond all Compariſon; muſt be the Sorrow, the Anguiſh, the Grief and piercing Miſery of thoſe wretched Souls, that ſhall in his juſt Diſpleaſure be driven from the Face and the Favour of God in Heaven.

If my Memory fails me not, St. *Chryſoſtom* inclines to think, that the ſevereſt Torment of the Damn'd will conſiſt in their unſpeakable Grief; their unconceiveable Shame, and afflicting Sorrow: to think that they have loſt thoſe Joys in Heaven which they once had in their Power to have ſecured. And doubtleſs, all Men will then be ſenſible and Confeſs, that all Solid Happineſs, and True Joy is with him. Then ſhall they ſeek his Fa-

Favour with Tears, but he will *hide his Face from them.* Then will their Teeth Gnaſh, their Spirits Fret, their Hearts bleed with Anguiſh and Remorſe: that they have not been more Wiſe. And this will be one, and no contemptible part of their Torments; that with fervid Earneſtneſs, and Longing, Great Impatience; they ſhall Deſire, and Thirſt to be with God; and ſhall not be able to obtain it. And therefore,

Fruitleſs Repentance.

II. Another part of the Torment will be, that of a Fruitleſs Repentance, and unprofitable Remorſe hereupon. *The Worm that never Dieth,* the Senſe of their own Folly; the Tortures of their own Conſciences; and their Reflections on the Miſery they have brought upon themſelves, and now deſpair of ever having it removed. For it cannot be, but that when Men are involv'd and immerſed deep in Miſery and Torments; and ſurrounded with bitter Lamentations and Woe: it cannot be, but that the Reflections they make on their own ill Conduct; will be like Vinegar, and Salt poured into their Wounds;

and

and make their Anguiſh the more keen and piercing. They muſt be Wretched and dreadful Reſentments which Men have, to conſider that they have Violently and Obſtinately pul'd down that Deſtruction on their own Heads: which they once might, and were Importuned to have avoided; but now muſt never be deliver'd from; nor ever ceaſe to Suffer. And in the Torture of theſe Reflections; the ſharp Stings of this Worm that bites like a Scorpion: they will Endeavour, but in Vain, to eaſe their Grief by loud Execrations, and bitter Curſes, againſt their own Baſe Perverſeneſs, and Incorrigible Neglect.

III. Another part of their Puniſhment ſhall be the Eternal Converſation of Devils, who inſtead of Pity ſhall Deride and Inſult over their Calamities. *Depart ye Curſed into everlaſting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* This is ſo certain to be one part of their Portion; that our Saviour tells us, Hell was chiefly deſign'd for Devils; *prepar'd* to be the Curſed Manſions of thoſe Apoſ-

The Society of Devils.

Mat. 25. 41.

tate Spirits, after they had fallen from Heaven, and were baniſhed from the Favour of the Almighty. It was not, it ſeems, originally intended for Mankind; it is we our ſelves, by imitating the curſed Apoſtacy of Devils: have made our ſelves unfit for Heaven, and oblig'd God to confine us thither; as the only proper Place and Agreeable Society, for thoſe Ungracious Monſters; that love *not God, and obey not the Goſpel of his Son.*

And there is no Queſtion, but that thoſe envious Fiends, that thirſt ſo impatiently after the Blood of Souls; that are ſo induſtriouſly bent upon the Ruine of Mankind; that wander about like roaring Lions, ſeeking for ſomebody to devour: will be fond of the Fruit of their Labours; will make the beſt of their Prey; will as earneſtly be imployed to Torment, as ever they were Sedulous to Entice, and Solicitous to Betray; And as forward to Inſult, and Rejoyce over the Calamities of Sinners: as they are now Deſirous to ſeduce them. Add to theſe, numerous Herds of Damned Spirits; of Miſe-

rable

rable, loſt, undone Souls like themſelves; that by mutual Complaints and repeated Ecchos of Lamentation: ſhall ſtill enhance each others Miſeries. For *there are Dogs, and Sorcerers, and Whoremongers, and Murtherers, and Idolaters, and whatſoever loveth, and maketh a Lie.* Rev. 22. 15. And from ſuch Forlorn and Deplorable Converſation, 'tis eaſy to conjecture what muſt be their Comforts, and Enjoyments. But

IV. A ſufficient Gueſs may be made of the Condition of the Inhabitants, from the Place of their Abode; and that is Hell. A word, that in the very ſound awakens all our Terrors; and ſuppoſes the worſt of all Torments. And if in other Languages it admits of a ſofter Interpretation than in ours: yet the Expreſſions that are commonly joyn'd along with it: do abundantly make up the reſt of its Direful and Horrid Characters. Chriſt expreſly declares it to be a place of diſmal Tortures, both to Soul and and Body. *Fear not them who kill the Body, and are not able to kill the Soul: but rather fear him who is able to deſtroy both Body and Soul in Hell.* Mat. 10. 28.

Torment both to Body and Soul.

And to convince Men, that we do not Enhance the Tortures above what they are like to prove: let them remember, that it is declared to be nothing leſs than a Lake, a Pit, an Abyſs of Fire. Chriſt ſpeaking of Wicked Men by the Compariſon of Chaff, ſays, that God will *burn them in unquenchable Fire.* And in another place explaining the Parable of Tares; he ſays, that the *Son of Man ſhall ſend forth his Angels, and they ſhall gather out of his Kingdom all things that Offend; and them which do Iniquity: and ſhall caſt them into a Furnace of Fire, there ſhall be Wailing and Gnaſhing of Teeth.* And St. *Mark's* account of Hell is this: *Into Hell, into the Fire that never ſhall be Quenched, where the Worm never dieth, and the Fire is not quenched. And the Devil that deceived them, was caſt into the Lake of Fire and Brimſtone, where the Beaſt and the Falſe Prophets are, and ſhall be Tormented day and night, for ever and ever.* And if this be the place of Torments which God deſigns for Wicked Men, as the Goſpel plainly, and poſitively declares it is: Good God! nothing ſure can be added

Mat. 3. 12.

Mat. 13. 41, 42.

Mar. 9. 43, 44.

Rev. 20. 10.

ded to paint the Horror greater than it really will be found. *For who can dwell in everlaſting Burnings?* Or ſuſtain his Vengeance who is a *conſuming Fire.*

But I am ſenſible that ſome are of Opinion, that theſe Texts are not to be taken Litterally, and conſequently, Hell not to be underſtood to be a place of Real and Material Fire: but only that theſe Expreſſions are uſed to ſignify, that the Miſery ſhall be Great, and the Torments Exquiſite and Acute. And tho I never met with any Good Reaſons to vindicate this Mollifying Notion: yet knowing how naturally Men are Prone, and ſtrongly inclin'd, to extenuate their Puniſhments, and to flatter themſelves with vain Expectations of coming off with fewer Stripes than are really threatened; I ſhall conſider a little what force this Objection has.

In anſwer to which I ſhall not pretend to Demonſtrate, that Hell Neceſſarily muſt conſiſt of ſuch Material Fire; and that it is Impoſſible to be otherwiſe: but I ſhall rather obſerve two Things that are very fit to be conſidered in this debate.

Whether Hell conſiſts of Real Fire.

1. That it is not Impoſſible, nor Improbable that it ſhould be ſo: but rather, that there are ſeveral Good Reaſons for this Belief.

2. That, if it ſhould prove otherwiſe; yet no certain, or conſiderable Advantage can from thence ariſe to Wicked Men.

1. That it is not Impoſſible, no nor Improbable that it ſhould be ſo: but rather, that there are ſeveral Good Reaſons for this Belief. For

1. I think we have all the Reaſon Imaginable to interpret Scripture; and eſpecially the New Teſtament, according to the Literal Senſe of Words: unleſs there appears ſome great Neceſſity to the contrary. But there is no Material Objection againſt the Fire of Hell, either from other Texts of Scripture, or the Reaſon of Things. That therefore muſt certainly be the trueſt Senſe of theſe Texts, which is the Literal Senſe of them; And that is, that it really conſiſts of Fire. If it be objected, that it is the Place of Torment for Devils, that have no Bodies; this has

has certainly but little Force in it. For tho it is true, that theſe outward things Grieve and Afflict us, by the Mediation of our Bodies: yet after all it is our Souls that feel even the Pains and Torments of Fire that burn our Fleſh. And all Senſe, and Perception of Pain is in the Soul; tho conveyed by the Body. And as this is undeniable, ſo who is there of us all, that are Philoſophers Good enough, to know how far Fire *Can* or *Cannot* torment Spiritual Subſtances. Thoſe Spirits may poſſibly be capable of feeling ſuch Torture, tho we are not capable of conceiving how. This Objection therefore is founded on ſuch precarious Principles, and Things that we ſo imperfectly underſtand; that it will be found to have but little Force.

Again, if it ſhould be ſaid, that Bodies by Fire are diſſolved and ſoon loſe their Nature by that diſſolution; this is a Plea of the ſame Force and Philoſophy with the former. It is taken from the Nature and Appearances of Things now; Now indeed we ſee that Fire deſtroys the being of every thing it ſeiſes. But will it from hence

follow that it muſt do ſo in Hell too? Who knows how different the Nature of Things ſhall then be, from what they are at preſent? They may as well infer, that becauſe our Bodies are Mortal now, that we ſhall literally Die then: although the Scripture affirms the contrary, and declares that we ſhall be *raiſed Incorruptible.*

Theſe Arguments then have but little force, and do not at all hinder thoſe Scriptures from being taken in a plain Senſe, which declare Hell to conſiſt of real Fire. But that which makes this more probable is this.

2. The Body as well as the Soul is to be exquiſitely tormented there. If it were reaſonable to believe, that the Miſery of the Damned ſhould conſiſt only in the Trouble and Anguiſh of their Minds: this would be the beſt, and moſt plauſible Argument againſt the Fire of Hell. But there is no Reaſon to believe this, becauſe the Scripture affirms quite otherwiſe, and tells us expreſly of *God's deſtroying both Soul and Body too in Hell.* Indeed to what end ſhould the Body be raiſed from the Grave, and reunited to its Soul; but

Mat. 10. 28.

that

that God has decreed, that it ſhould ſhare with it in its Fortune, whether Good or Bad, and be partaker of its Felicities, or Torments.

This is moſt agreeable too, to the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God, that the Body and the Appetites of Fleſh, which have been ſo great Inlets to Vice, and adminiſtred ſo many ſtrong Temptations to Sin; ſhould alſo bear a part in the Sorrows, and Miſeries that Sin brings with it.

This then we muſt lay down as a certain Truth, and an undoubted Poſition, confirmed both by Scripture and Reaſon; that the Damned muſt be afflicted with Bodily Torments, as well as with Remorſe of Mind and Soul. And why then may not Fire be thought as fit to torment them as any other Inſtrument? The Torment muſt be ſharp and grievous, and what more fit exquiſitely to Torment than Fire?

It is therefore highly Probable at leaſt, that Hell ſhall conſiſt of Real Fire, and there are much better Reaſons for this Belief, than any that are brought againſt it. But

There may be other Torments equally ſevere.

2. If theſe Expreſſions ſhould be no more than Terrible Reſemblances, God ſpeaking to us after the manner of Men; and repreſenting it by things Signalized for their ſevere Tortures: Suppoſe this, I ſay, what Advantages would Men fetch from hence? Will they hence conclude that the Torments ſhall be leſs ſevere, becauſe they are not Fire? I doubt that this is a Precarious Inference. For do theſe Men think that God has no other way of Puniſhing Mankind with exquiſite Pains, and Tortures equal to thoſe of Fire? This is a childiſh Imagination. For in truth, this is to limit the Almighty Power of God, and to ſuppoſe that he has deviſed ſuch an Expedient of Tormenting Sinners in this Life: as that he cannot find out a Parallel to it in the next; even tho that is peculiarly reſerved for Vengeance, and for Judgment. And what is this, but to charge God at once, both with Impotence in not being Able, and with Folly in not conſulting to puniſh Sinners in Hell it ſelf, with as ſevere Miſery as even Good Men may ſuffer here. This I ſay is a Childiſh Conceit, and

and carries almoſt a Thouſand Abſurdities along with it.

Be ſatisfied then, that tho it ſhou'd not be found Real and Material Fire; yet that it may be found in all reſpects as Terrible and Smart; as Exquiſite and Grievous. That it May, nay be Satisfied that it Will; and do not think that God's Deſign in the Threatnings of the Goſpel is to Bugbear us out of any of the Pleaſures of this Life: but rather Conſider, and Value them as the ſolemn Declarations of a Serious, Good, and Wiſe God; and one who is *Righteous in all his Ways, and Holy in all his Works.* Who never forbids any thing, but upon Juſt Reaſons, and when he Threatens, he Decrees to Puniſh. From theſe Reflections it will be reaſonable to conclude, that if Hell be not really Fire; yet that it does at leaſt conſiſt in ſuch Acute and Severe Torments, of which Fire alone was by the Holy Spirit of God thought to be the moſt fit and proper Reſemblance. And what will Men get by changing the Nature of their Puniſhment; unleſs they could hope alſo to Mitigate the Degrees of its Severity?

Be-

Believe then, that ſuch ſhall be the Puniſhment which God reſerves for thoſe Deplorable Wicked Wretches, that harden their Hearts againſt all his Calls to Repentance; that devote themſelves wholly to Sin, and to the Pleaſures of it; and forget God and their Souls; and mind not Religion, nor the Laws and Inſtitutions of the Goſpel. They ſhall be Baniſht from God, and in that Exile, from all Peace, and Reſt, and Joy, and Conſolation. They ſhall be ſtung by the never dying Worm, and be gawled in the Convictions of their own Conſciences, and the Sharp, Cutting, Vexatious Reſentments of their State; and with inward Indignation and Tranſports of Fury againſt themſelves, for their curſed Folly: and for that Invincible, Irreclaimable Perverſeneſs, to which they owe their Sufferings and Miſery. They ſhall be condemned to an Eternal Society with Devils, and Infernal Fiends, to be farther Rack'd and Vex'd by the Deriſion, and Scorn, and Malicious Inſults of thoſe Invidious Apoſtates, inſtead of finding Pity and Compaſſion from them.

This

This is to be thy Portion and thy Lot, Hardened and Obdurate Sinner! who wilt not ſuffer us to prevail upon thee to repent. And if upon Mature Deliberation, thou haſt reſolved upon it; art well prepar'd to bear all this, and wilt eſteem the Pleaſures of Vice, worth ſuch a State: Go on, Bold Man, and take thy fill of Love, and Wine, and every ſenſual Joy. Thou knoweſt the Wages of thy Iniquity, and as God has, ſo muſt we, leave thee to thy own wretched and perverſe Choice. He who is Reſolved he will be Miſerable, and will not dread the Deſtruction of Body and Soul in Hell: may withſtand the ſtrongeſt Arguments, and the force of all Entreaties; and has it in his Power to be eternally undone.

There remains but one thing more that we add in this Matter; and that is,

V. Laſtly, To conſider, that all this Miſery muſt be Eternal and without end. This is expreſly taught us in the Scripture, *The Worm ſhall never die, and the Fire ſhall never be quenched. Depart ye Curſed into Everlaſting Fire. And the Wicked ſhall be Puniſhed with Everlaſting Deſtruction*; and *The Eternity of Hell torments.*

and St. *John* in the Revelation ſpeaks of being Tormented *Day and Night for ever and ever.*

And tho it is true, this does not enter into the Nature of the Thing, it is but a Circumſtance: yet 'tis ſuch a one as does as much Concern, and will as much Afflict us as any thing in the Nature of the Torments can. Were our Miſery and Sorrow never ſo ſharp, and as Grievous as we can Imagin; yet if they were at laſt to have an End, tho after many Ages, and Thouſands of Generations, there would be ſome Hope and ſome Comfort. But in that it is Eternal, and ſhall never ceaſe, there can be no Conſolation at all. Nothing but Horror and Confuſion and Black Deſpair.

And this is a Thought ſo Diſmal and ſo mighty Dreadful; that we find Men frighted with the Apprehenſions of it, willing to Abate the Terror, and Induſtriouſly to Employ themſelves to Diſcover ſome Gentler Conſtruction of thoſe Texts: that God's Judgments may ſeem leſs ſevere. To this End they will not allow that the Torments of Hell will be literally and ſtrictly Eternal; but as this Word

Word is ſometimes in the Old Teſtament uſed in a limited Senſe; for ſuch continuance as the Nature of the Things ſpoken of will admit: ſo they would underſtand it when it threatens Deſtruction in the New. They would have meant, a Limited Eternity, a Duration that ſhall continue till the Fire ſhall have burnt up, and diſſolved all combuſtible Matter: and then for want of farther Fewel; at laſt go out, and the Hell to be at an End.

This is ſome Mens Notion of an Eternity of Torments. And becauſe we are too prone to imbibe Principles, that Flatter us, and repreſent our Caſe leſs Diſmal than we expected; and ſuch Erroneous Apprehenſions do great Miſchief, and Invalidate thoſe Arguments, with which the Goſpel Endeavours to Diſſwade Men from Iniquity: it will be neceſſary to enquire into this Matter more particularly; and fairly to conſider the Arguments that are uſed on either hand.

Now they who deny an Abſolute and Unlimited Eternity of Torments inſiſt chiefly upon theſe three Arguments.

1. They

The firſt Objection.

1. They proceed upon Principles of Philoſophy, aud ſay that it cannot be Eternal without a Miracle. For this, ſay they, being the Nature of Fire; that by a violent Agitation of Particles, it Diſſolves all things, and Torments our Bodies here only by ſuch a Diſſolution of our Parts: our Bodies, by the fierceneſs of Fire, muſt at laſt be totally Diſſolved; and cannot be capable of farther Puniſhment; unleſs by a Reſtitution, and a conſtant ſeries of Miracles to Reſtore them. This is their firſt Defence; and theſe are fine and pretty Thoughts, but of no great force. If Men have no better Evidence againſt the Eternity of Hell Torments, than from the vain Principles of this Philoſophy: they can yield but little Comfort either to the Damn'd, or to thoſe who fear, and are in Danger of Damnation.

For the very Foundation of this Argument is Rotten and ill laid. 'Tis built upon the Sand; in that it is a Concluſion drawn from Principles that we are ignorant of. 'Tis true, Fire by a violent Agitation diſſolves all Bodies now, and by this diſ-

diſſolution torments our Bodies when it burns them. But from hence to infer, that it ſhall not be able to torment Men in Hell, without diſſolving of theirs too, is more than we are, or can be ſure of. For as was ſaid above, who is there of us all that can know the exact Differences between the various Nature of Things then, and now? That they ſhall, or ſhall not Operate juſt the ſame way?

We read in Scripture of three Perſons, that were thrown into a Furnace of Fire, and were none of them either Deſtroy'd or Tormented. And he that can keep Men in Flames without either Periſhing or Smarting; without all Queſtion knows how to Torment them in Flames without a Diſſolution. And tho 'tis true, the Inſtance mentioned was Miraculous; yet who knows, but that, what as things are now, is Miraculous; when we ſhall have a *New Heaven, and a New Earth*, and almoſt all Things in them, *New Powers*, and new Laws; that which is now Extraordinary, may then be Natural and Common. For how far Fire ſhall then exert it ſelf upon our Bodies wholly depends

Dan. 3. 25.

2 Pet. 3. 13.

upon the Commiſſion which God ſhall give it, and the Powers that he ſhall then Impart thereto. This Objection then from the Philoſophy of things, can have no great force, till we better know what the Nature of them ſhall be hereafter.

The ſecond Objection.

2. 'Tis Objected that thoſe Texts of Scripture that declare the Torments of Hell to be Eternal, are not neceſſarily to be underſtood in a ſtrict and abſolute Senſe. For ſince the Expreſſions are capable of a milder Interpretation, and uſed in ſuch in ſome places: they *may* and *ought* alſo to be underſtood ſo here.

But to this I anſwer, that their having been ſometimes in the Old Teſtament, appropriated to things that were not Abſolutely Eternal: does not hinder at all from interpeting them in the New, in the abſolute and moſt ſtrict Senſe. For the Words are ſo ſignificant, that if theſe cannot, nothing can Denote any Abſolute Eternity. Let us therefore but for a while ſuppoſe, that Hell Torments are ſtrictly Everlaſting: and that God Almighty intended to Reveal and Proclaim them to be ſo. I would only

only ask by what Words, or in what other Expreſſions, than what are already uſed; this could be declared. I do not think any Man can expreſs the Notion of an Eternal, and Everlaſting State, in more Expreſs, or in more Significant Phraſe, than that which is already uſed. And if ſo, this muſt be a plain Proof that Hell Torments ſhall be abſolutely Eternal, unleſs ſome Good Reaſons be given to confine theſe Phraſes to a more limited Senſe.

Let me add again, that the Eternity of Torments is declared by the very ſame Words, by which the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Felicities of the Bleſſed are declared to be Eternal. And yet there is no Diſpute made concerning the Endleſs and Everlaſting Duration of that Happineſs. Which plainly ſhows, that the Expreſſions do as properly and fully Import an Abſolutely Eternity as any Words can. And if they have ſometimes been uſed in a limited Senſe; it does not follow that they muſt or ought to be ſo limitted here: unleſs ſome very Good Reaſons can be given for ſuch a Limitation. Rea-

ſons I mean, not from the Principles of Philoſophy, or the Gloſſes on Scripture Phraſe, which will be of little Force here; unleſs ſupported by Arguments from the Nature of Puniſhments, or the Attributes of God. If there be any thing of Weight to be pleaded againſt this Doctrine, it muſt be from one of theſe Topics. And this is indeed the

The third Objection.

3. Thing that they inſiſt on; *viz.* that God muſt not be ſuppoſed to puniſh Mankind with Puniſhments ſo far exceeding the Greatneſs of their Sins. For this, as they imagine, is not agreeable to Juſtice, and his end of Puniſhing. But why ſo? What I pray is the Rule of Juſtice, that is to be obſerved in Puniſhments? Or what the End that God propoſes by the Condemnation of Wicked Men? The Anſwer to theſe two Queſtions will ſet us in ſomewhat of a clearer Light, concerning the State of this Matter.

What Proportion in Puniſhments.

1. Firſt then let us conſider what is Rule of Juſtice, to be obſerved in puniſhing Offenders. It is that a Proportion be kept between the Offence and the Torment. I grant it ſo far, that the Greateſt Sins ſhall have

have the greateſt Torments; and the moſt hainous Offenders be *beaten with the greateſt Number of Stripes.* But to ſuppoſe that the Proportion of Puniſhments muſt of neceſſity be conformable, or exactly adequate, either in Degree, or Duration, to the Profit, or Pleaſure, or any other Advantage of the Crime: I have already ſhown above, has no Truth, nor Reaſon in it. For according to this Rule, it will be Impoſſible to Vindicate almoſt any Nation in their Legiſlative Power; Nothing being more common in all Countries; than to aſſign to almoſt all Offences, ſuch Puniſhments; as both in Duration and Degree far exceed the Advantages gotten by their Crimes. What think you of God's own Law; that Theft ſhould be puniſhed with Reſtitution four fold? What proportion is there between the Benefit of the Crime, and the Suffering in the Puniſhment, when the one is four times as great as the other? Or what think you of another Law of God? *He that ſtealeth a Man, and ſelleth him, ſhall be put to Death.* Here is a difference both in Degree and Duration too. For Ex. 21. 16.

he that was ſtolen loſt only his Liberty; but the Criminal was to loſe his Life. And he that loſt his Liberty had the Poſſibility of regaining it; but when the Offender was put to Death, he had no hope; the Effects of his Puniſhments were Eternal. If then there be Juſtice in theſe Laws of God's own Enacting; we from thence ſee plainly, that the Rule of Juſtice is not, that the Puniſhment muſt be proportionable either in its Meaſure or Continuance, to the Sin or the Profit of it: but muſt be determined by ſome other Rule.

And if this be not the true Rule of Proportion in the Juſtice of Puniſhments, we ſhall ſee the ſtrongeſt Objection againſt the Eternity of Hell Torments come to nothing. For the moſt Plauſible, and Taking thing ſaid in this Cauſe; is when Men put the Queſtion; How God can puniſh the Sins of a ſhort Life, and that afford a much ſhorter Pleaſure: with Miſery that ſhall be eternal? Which looks like a Difficulty, when we think that the Miſery of our Iniquities ſhould laſt, juſt as long and no longer than our Iniquities do. But if this be

be a vain Conceit, and no true Rule of Proportion between Crime, and Puniſhment; as we have ſhown, I hope, it is not: then this Objection is of no force.

The Juſtice of the Puniſhment then ſeems rather to reſpect the Greatneſs of the Perſon offended, and the Pernicious Conſequences of the Sins; and whatever Penalties are agreeable to theſe are Reaſonable, and Juſt, and Wiſe: Let the acqueſt of Mens Vices be never ſo ſmall, never ſo tranſient. So that in Truth the Determination of this Cauſe muſt depend upon the

2. Queſtion, *viz.* What Ends God propoſes in the Condemnation of Wicked Men. For whatever Penalties are neceſſary to their Reaſonable and Wiſe Ends of Puniſhing, muſt be both Juſt and Wiſe, let the Miſery and Torments of theſe Puniſhments be never ſo ſevere. Now the Ends of Puniſhing may be various. *What their end of Puniſhments.*

1. It is ſometimes to vindicate the Dignity, and Authority and Power of the Perſons offended. And this particularly has place in the offences committed, againſt Governours and Magiſtrates. Where a very ſlight

Crime, as it would be thought in other Caſes, is Chaſtiſed with the ſevereſt Stripes. And this may be, and is, no doubt, one End of God's Damning the Wicked. It is in part to Avenge himſelf of the bold Contempts, and ſaucy Indignities of Haughty and Profane Men; who both by their Words and Actions affront his Divine Majeſty, contemn his Authority, and Defy his Power. Particularly, it is to vindicate his Juſtice, in his Diſpenſations towards Mankind as their King and Governour; that it ſhould not be *as with the Righteous, ſo with the Wicked:* but that according to the different Tenor of their Actions; there ſhould be a Difference in their Conditions. It is to curb and humble the Inſolence of Wicked Men. And for this Reaſon, the more Obſtinately and Perverſely Men offend; the more of Stubbornneſs and Contumacy there is in their Tranſgreſſions: the more afflicting Torments are uſually aſſign'd them. God is not willing that Wicked Men ſhould Inſult over, and Deſpiſe the Good in the next World, as they too commonly do in this. And therefore

fore to vindicate his Oppreſſed Servants, he reſolves to baniſh their Oppreſſors from his Preſence, and to conſign them to Torments; to bring down their Inſolent Spirits, and by the Severity of their Sufferings, to convince them of their Folly; and Force them to Relent, and Mollify their Hardy Sower Hearts. And this may ſhow the Reaſonableneſs of the Severity of Torments in General, tho not Directly and Abſolutely of their Eternity.

But what next occurrs ſeems more directly appoſite to the caſe in hand, *viz.*

2. That one Juſt, and Wiſe End of Puniſhments reſpects the Miſchieveous Conſequences of Sin; and is intended to prevent them. This we find is the Great End of all the Puniſhments inflicted by Humane Laws. And on this account it is that they ſo often exceed that which looks like a juſt Proportion to their Crimes. For this End we in this Nation puniſh Robbers and Houſe-Breakers with Death, not out of any genuine Barbarity peculiar to us, or that we value our Goods equal with the Life of the

the Robber: but becauſe no leſs Puniſhments would have any Tolerable Influence to reſtrain them.

And indeed this ſeems to have been the Original Cauſe of all Severities among Men; that the Naughtineſs and Wickedneſs of the World have made them neceſſary. In the beginning of Ages Puniſhments were more Tender and Gentle. *Cain*'s Puniſhment for the Murther of his Brother, was only Baniſhment; and the firſt Puniſhment of Theft, was only by Reſtitution, and the ſhame that followed it. But when Mankind grew more Audacious, and more Daring to do Ill: the Fault increaſing, the ſeverity increaſed alſo. And no Penalties were ever Thought Unjuſt, Unwiſe, or Unreaſonable; which the Wickedneſs of Men made neceſſary to be Inflicted.

And this is Juſt the Caſe. The Perverſeneſs of Men, and their Obſtinacy in Sin has made it neceſſary for God to eſtabliſh Laws, under the Penalty of Eternal Torments. Had Men had Goodneſs enough to have been kept in by Duty, and by Reaſon: and Gentleneſs or Wiſdom enough

enough to have been led by Hope; and could have been prevailed upon to be Religious to gain Heaven: there had been no Hell, no Eternal Torments threatned. But God knew our ſtubborn Spirits; He found that nothing but Fears and Terrors could affect us: And therefore it was neceſſary to threaten us with ſuch Deſtruction. Nay we ſee by too ſad Experience, how Impenetrable, and Rocky ſome Mens Hearts are; how they yet are ſtubborn, and Outface, even the Terrours of Eternal Flames. What then could we have hoped for under a ſlighter Penalty? The denouncing of Eternal Miſery in Hell, is neceſſary to engage Men to be Religious: and this ſure is enough to vindicate the Juſtice, and all the Attributes of God in inflicting it.

I confeſs, the Execution of theſe Torments at the Day of Judgment, cannot be ſaid to Prevent Sins, which which is the common end of Puniſhments; becauſe, then there ſhall be no farther Trial. But it will be neceſſary to vindicate the Wiſdom of God in making ſuch Laws, and the Authority of them when made: and

to

to make known his Holineſs and that Deteſtation of Sin, from whence all ſuch ſevere Laws and Threatnings have proceeded. And ſince Man cannot be reſtrained by any gentler Methods, why ſhould it not be conſiſtant with the Juſtice and Goodneſs of God, as well as of his Vicegerents: to execute thoſe Puniſhments which the Naughtineneſs of Men has made it neceſſary for him to Threaten? Eſpecially, when the Execution of his Laws in finally Rewarding the Good, and Puniſhing the Wicked: will Vindicate his Providence, and all his Diſpenſations to each of them.

Will any Man then ſay, that the Menaces of the Goſpel, are but only Bluſtering and Amazing Words; that that is threatned which ſhall never be executed? This ſure muſt be a moſt Shameful Reflection upon God, and open a wide Door to the Licentiouſneſs of Men. And therefore if this be too Extravagant, and borders too near to Blaſphemy to aſſert it: it is reaſonable to believe, that thoſe Torments which the Goſpel declares to be Eternal, ſhall be Eternal,

nal, Strictly and Properly ſo called. But,

3. *Laſtly*, That which is peculiar to this Caſe is; that God has made us Creatures of an Immortal Nature, and ſent us into this World to make our Fortunes for ever and ever, by our Actions here. And by a Firm, Irreverſible Decree has appointed, that this Life only ſhall be our State of Preparation, and that to come of Recompence. This is Manifeſt from the whole Tenor of the Holy Scripture; There is no *Repentance in the Grave*, but as the *Tree falls ſo it lies*. They who will be Happy muſt prepare for it now, or they ſhall be rejected. This is Undeniably clear from the whole Word of God, and to deny it is to make Hell to be nothing elſe but a Refiners Fire; out of which Wicked Men ſhall come Purified from *all their Droſs, and Tin*; from all their Filth and Naughtineſs. A Conceit which has no Foundation in Scripture; nor it can be conſiſtant with the whole Deſign and Scope of what it declares, concerning our being now Candidates for Heaven, and to be then Rewarded according to our Works. This

An Immortal Creature if Miſerable muſt be eternally miſerable.

This then being without Contradiction True; the Conſequence is that our Eternal State, muſt depend upon our preſent Care; and that they who after Death are once Miſerable, muſt be ſo for ever. And if there be any thing unreaſonable in an Eternity of Torments, that Men come into by this Means; it muſt be in the Original Diſpenſation. It muſt be, that it was Unjuſt or Unwiſe to paſs ſuch a Decree, and to make our Eternity depend on a Life ſo ſhort. So that if Men will Cavil, it muſt be at the Foundation of God's Diſpenſation towards us. They muſt arraign his Attributes; either that he has made us for Eternity, or that our Happineſs or Miſery depend on the Conduct of ſo ſhort a Life. If they can Level their Objections here: let them try their Skill, and batter the whole Goſpel all at once. But if this be too Impregnable a Foretreſs; if this be too Juſtifiable: they muſt not charge God's Juſtice, that the Miſeries of the Wicked ſhall be everlaſting. For that, upon ſuch a Diſpenſation, is in a manner inevitable. That we are to live for ever is indeed from

from God, and 'tis a Bleſſing as he deſigned it. For he intended us to be Happy; and that Men are Miſerable is owing to themſelves; and it is becauſe they would be Wicked. God has called, and intreated them to Return, and to be Saved; but they Refuſed. And that they are eternally Miſerable, is the Neceſſary Conſequence of their being Immortal and Wicked. They are Eternally Miſerable becauſe they are Immortal Creatures and Die in ſuch a State as muſt bring them to Miſery. How can it be avoided? It muſt either be by Annihilating them, which they have no Reaſon to expect; or elſe by Tranſlating them from Torments to Happineſs, which cannot be conſiſtant with God's Holineſs or Juſtice without their True Repentance. But alas, then is no Time, then is no Place for Repentance, or Faith, or Reformation; Then there ſhall be no ſacrifice for Sin, no Mediation, no Pardon. All theſe things were appointed by God's Decree for this preſent Life of Trial: and when the Judgment comes, Chriſt ſhall deliver up the Kingdom to the Father, that

God

God may be all in all; and all theſe things ſhall ceaſe. There remains nothing therefore for the Sinner then, but to enjoy his Portion, which not God has brought upon him, but his own Choice.

So that the Eternity of Torments in Hell, is ſo far from being Improbable: that according to what the whole Bible teaches concerning our preſent Life, being a Time of Probation for Eternity; it can ſcarce be otherwiſe. It can can hardly be, if an Imortal Creature will be Wicked, which he knows will make him Miſerable, and put him out of the Power of recovering from that Miſery: but that he muſt be Miſerable to all Eternity.

It is therefore reaſonable to Believe and Fear, that the Torments of the Damned, and the Vengeance that God will execute upon the Impenitent, ſhall be Truly and Properly Everlaſting. Do not then flatter your ſelves, Sinners, that the Puniſhments of your Iniquities ſhall be leſs Durable than the Goſpel Publiſhes them to be. Be your Pretences, or Pleas, never ſo Plauſible, and Fair to Appearance: do not venture

venture your Souls thus. It is plain from God's Word, that they who will be Happy muſt prepare for it now: and that the Next Life is Reſerved to Recompence Mens Actions. And conſequently, that thoſe who are then doomed to Miſery, muſt be Miſerable without End. And whatever Notions we may have of this Severity, God will not change his Decrees for our Vain Scruples; nor can any of our falſe Reaſons alter the Eſtabliſhed Nature of Things; nor ſhorten thoſe Torments a Day which God has publiſhed to be Eternal.

The Application of theſe Thoughts.

And this I ſay again, is the laſt Motive we can uſe to recommend Religion, and to diſſwade Men from a vicious Life. And the Application of it needs be but ſhort, in that the only thing to be conſider'd is; whether Men are Willing to be thus Wretchedly and Deplorably Unhappy? Whether they have Thought upon it, Like their Conditions, and are Reſolved to take the Pleaſures of an Impious Life upon them? If they have, we have done, we have only to Addreſs our ſelves to them in the

Amos 4. 12. Words of the Prophet; *Becauſe thou wilt do this, Prepare to meet thy God.* Prepare to meet him, but arm'd with Vengeance, having Fire in his Hand, and Millions of Deſtroying Angels attending upon him, eternally to Deſtroy thee. Not to make thee ceaſe to be; Look for no ſuch Favour; but to make thee to Live, and to be Tormented Everlaſtingly.

If thou wilt be Irreligious theſe are the Conditions upon which thou muſt be ſo, and this muſt be thy Portion. Nay there is one Thing to be added more which ought not to be omitted. In this Miſerable State there are Degrees of Torments, and Wicked Chriſtians that have abuſed the Greateſt Mercies, withſtood the Strongeſt Obligations, and with Incorrigible Obſtinacy Hardned themſelves againſt the moſt Importunate Entreaties: muſt have their Tortures proportionable to their Crimes; muſt have the Furnace yet ſeven times Hotter: and as they are the worſt of Sinners, ſo they muſt Burn in the hotteſt Flames. Be not therefore haſty O Man to enter upon ſuch a State; Think well beforehand, becauſe

cauſe hereafter it will be too late.

Conſider with what Countenance, and Courage thou canſt meet this curſed Doom. Canſt thou look upon the Face of an Angry God and not be daunted? Canſt thou Salute Infernal Fiends that come to ſcourge thee, and bid their Stripes welcome? Canſt thou, with Patience, hear thy Eternal Sentence read, and not Tremble, nor be Diſmayed, at a *Depart ye Curſed into Everlaſting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* If thou canſt, Sin on, and take thy fill of Vice and all its Pleaſures.

But alas Man, thou canſt not. I know it is too Common to bid Defiance to all theſe Torments, when Senſual Men think at them a Diſtance; I have heard Men ſay, *Give me the Pleaſures of this World, and let God do what he will hereafter.* But theſe are Vain Glorious Heroes; This is falſe Bravery; and only a Good Countenance put upon a Bad Cauſe: when Wine inflames them, and keeps them too Hot for Cool and Sober Thinking.

Theſe Men have the ſame Affections and the ſame Senſe of Miſery

with their Brethren. They faint with Sickneſs; look pale with Fear; complain with Anguiſh; Roar under Pain; conſult their Eaſe, and dread to be under Torments now, as well as other Men. And Muſt, and Will, no doubt, whatever they Profeſs, be as much Affrighted, and as much Amazed as any, to *dwell in Everlaſting Burnings.*

It muſt be ſo, you cannot bear it Sinner; Bleſs God therefore, that you are yet on this ſide the Grave; that the Door is not yet quite ſhut upon you; yet your Day of Grace yet remains: and while it laſts Improve it. You have yet Opportunity to make your Peace, let not the Precious Minutes ſlip. Virtue, and Religion, and doing Good; the ſerving God with Zeal; and keeping his Commandments: Will effectually prevent this Miſery. This is the Way, and walk in it, and you ſhall live. For if there be any confidence to be plac'd in the Dictates of our Minds; any Truſt to be given to the Principles of Reaſon; or any Truth in Scripture: there is a God, and he will Judge the World. And if there be; and if he will; the re-

reſult of the Judgment muſt be this; that Good Men ſhall be completely Happy, and the Wicked eternally Miſerable for ever.

CHAP. VII.

How to keep Religious Vows and Reſolutions.

IT is ſcarce poſſible that any Man ſhould ſeriouſly Exerciſe his Thoughts in the Contemplation of the Reaſonableneſs, and Excellencies, and great Advantages of Religion: but it muſt give him ſome Inclinations, and Diſpoſitions to be Good; and notwithſtanding all the moſt charming Allurements of Sin, make him Wiſh and Deſire at leaſt, that he were free from the Infatuating Powers of it, and accuſtomed to live well like other Men. This Influence is ſo Conſtant, and proceeds ſo naturally from the Agreeableneſs of things to the Dictates and Sentiments of every ſober Mind: that I cannot but Promiſe my ſelf, and Hope, that

the ſerious Conſideration of what is recommended in the foregoing Chapters; however unaccurate the Compoſition; will produce ſome ſuch like effect; and create in Men ſome Holy Fires, ſome warm Inclinations, and affectionate Diſpoſitions to be Good. But what then? Men may ſee the Folly of their Vices, and be ſenſible of the Danger of their Sins; they may Hate, and Loath the Shamefulneſs of them; wiſh that they were delivered from the Snares; and ſometimes make Vows, and take up ſolemn Reſolutions to avoid them: and yet after all, not bring that Good Diſpoſition to Good Effect.

For the ſtrongeſt Conviction of the Reaſonableneſs, Excellency, and Neceſſity of Religion; if we go no farther; will not be, of it ſelf, a ſufficient Principle of a true Converſion. This is what evidently falls under our daily Experience and Obſervation; who find Men every Day cenſuring the Folly and Extravagancy of their Actions; and Promiſing, and Proteſting, with all the Appearance of Sincerity that can be had; not to run into the like Iniquities again: and

and yet, it may be the next ſeaſonable and favourable Opportunity; when their Wonted Company entices, or ſome Tempting Bait allures: the Corrupt Diſpoſition gains the Predominancy, and the Man forgets all his Obligations; and in defiance of all his Vows, ruſhes into the Evil, that he promiſed to avoid.

Nay we not only find it thus, but the Apoſtle tells us; that conſidering the Circumſtances, and Condition a Man may be in, it may become almoſt Impoſſible to do otherwiſe. For without all Queſtion there is ſuch a thing, as that the Vicious Appetites, and Debaucht, Corrupt Deſires of a Man may gain the Aſcendant, and Overrule the Soundeſt Dictates of the Mind and Conſcience; and betray him to the Commiſſion of thoſe Iniquities which he Hated, and Diſapproved, and peremptorily reſolv'd againſt. Of *ſuch* it is that St. *Paul* ſays, *the Good that I would, that I do not*, or am not able to do; *and the Evils that I would not*, thoſe I live in: *For when to do Good is preſent with me, how to Perform that which I delight in, I find not* ſufficient Capa- Rom. 7. 15, 18.

city and Power. And therefore I ſay, to convince a Man of the Reaſonableneſs, Excellency, and Neceſſity of Religion, is not all that is requir'd to bring him to the Zealous and Conſtant Practice of it: unleſs there be added alſo, ſome Inſtructions how he may break looſe from the Powers of Sin, in which he has been entangled; and Execute what he Religiouſly intends; and actually obſerve and obey thoſe Laws which he finds to be his only, and ſafe Guide to Everlaſting Reſt.

For this Reaſon I have reſerv'd, and ſhall now attempt, as the Concluſion of this whole Diſcourſe, to offer ſome Directions to thoſe, if any ſuch there be, who upon the Peruſal of it ſhall find themſelves inclin'd to Abandon their Sins; and make their Peace with God: how they may beſt be able to keep their Vows; and to put their Good Purpoſes in Execution. To which End there are two things to be conſidered.

I. That the Difficulties or Incapacities which Men lie under proceed chiefly from the Predominant Influence

ence of their Luſts, and Paſſions, and Corrupt Affections; and are eſpecially occaſioned by long Habits, and Great Indulgence in Iniquity.

II. That the Victory over theſe Difficulties is not to be gotten by our ſelves in our own proper Strength, but that we ſtand in need of Divine, Supernatural Aſſiſtance from above. From whence I ſhall take Occaſion to enquire,

III. By what Means that Divine Aſſiſtance may be obtained, and beſt Improv'd to the ſubduing all Vicious Diſpoſitions and Deſires; and effectually to bring forth the Good Fruits of Righteouſneſs.

An Incapacity to do Good contracted by vicious habits.

I. That the Difficulties and Incapacities which Men lie under in doing Good, proceed chiefly from the Predominancy of their Luſts, and Paſſions, and corrupt Affections; and are eſpecially occaſioned by long Habits, and Indulgence in Iniquity. It is beyond all Contradiction certain, that Men may be thus Controul'd and Overrul'd, in their beſt Purpoſes, by the Predominant influence of Sin upon their Minds. And if all this was Ori-

Originally from God, and at firſt made by him the Nature and Condition of Mankind: it would look like an Excuſe, and an Apology for all the Enormities which Men commit thereby; to conſider from whence this Incapacity was deriv'd. It is therefore much to the Honour of God, and to the Vindication of his Goodneſs: that the Holy Scripture has acquainted us *how*, and *by what Means* this Spiritual Impotency or Diſability comes upon us.

It is not Originally from God, for he created all things in Wiſdom; and in Perfections ſuitable to the Ends for which they were deſign'd. And when he took a Review of them *behold they were all very Good.* And if this was his Wiſdom and the Exactneſs of his Care in all thoſe Inferiour Creatures which were made for the Uſe of Man: much more muſt we conclude the ſame of that more Noble, and Diviner Being, for whoſe Comfort all the Reſt were made, and over which Man has obtain'd almoſt an Abſolute and Supreme Dominion. Him God created in a Diviner Form, and *after his own* pure *Image* and Likeneſs

neſs, as I have ſhown already, by a larger Communication of Wiſdom and Knowledge, and Spiritual Power; and the moſt excellent Principles of Holineſs and a Religious Obedience.

Thus Man came forth Innocent and and Complete from the Hands of God; and with ſuch a Perfection of all his Faculties and Powers, as Qualified him to anſwer the End of his Creation; and to do whatſoever was required from him. And thoſe Divine Gifts were as ſo many Talents committed to his Care; by Improvement to be Continued and Increaſed; and at laſt Rewarded with Eternal Life: but by a Negligent Abuſe to be taken from him, and with-held; and he to be left in a meaner and more degenerate State; to ſtrugle with the Vicious Affections he had choſen to Indulge: and to labour under the Tyranny of thoſe diſorderly Appetites, that he had let looſe without reſtraint.

This was once our Condition; and thus the Miſery firſt came upon us; our Firſt Parents miſemploy'd their Truſt, and thereby loſt thoſe Divine Perfections: and we who are deſcended

ded from their Loyns, muſt ſuffer for their Miſcarriages, and inherit with them their Loſſes and Misfortunes. But that no Man may think himſelf excuſable in the Iniquities that he commits, by the Impulſe and Inſtigation of thoſe Appetites and Diſpoſitions which he thus calls Natural: I muſt here put him in mind of what I have obſerved above; I mean, that the Diſpoſitions to Evil that are Natural are very weak and Feeble. They are only ſuch Inclinations as God ſuffers us to fall under for the Trial of our Virtue, and a Proof of the Good, or Evil Temper of our Hearts: according to the Choice and Determination of which we may either Govern them, or be Govern'd by them. And their Power and Force will be more or leſs, according to the Habitual Courſe of our Converſation. If indulg'd, they grow Predominant, and are not eaſily to be reduced. If Mortified, and kept in Subjection; they give no mighty Trouble.

And therefore it muſt be ſaid, notwithſtanding all the Corruption and Degeneracy of Humane Nature, that

that there is not a Man a live who labours under the Inſulting Powers of Sin, and Sinful Appetites; and is thereby hindred from living in that ſincere Obedience, and Holineſs which he knows to be his Duty: but it is wholly owing to himſelf, and proceeds from his own Neglect. And however it may make his Caſe Deplorable, and his Repentance extremely Difficult, and Grievous: yet in all his Tranſgreſſions committed thereupon, he is utterly inexcuſable; in that his Diſability is chiefly from himſelf, and by a Faithful Care might have been prevented. It proceeds from indulging thoſe evil diſpoſitions, which it was his Duty, and once eaſy, to have ſubdued. He ſhould have lived a Life of Devotion; in ſtrict Temperance, and Sobriety; in Juſtice, and Charity; in the Worſhip of God; and the Love of Men: and thus his Corrupt Inclinations had been Small, and Weak, and would have given, tho ſome, yet but Few, and thoſe ſmall Interruptions to his Good and Holy Converſation. But inſtead of that, he has it may be, let his Wild Affecti-

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ons looſe; given them up the Reigns; indulg'd his Paſſions, and Pampered his Luſts, and *made Proviſion for the Fleſh*: and then, they which are by Nature Weak, thus Nouriſhed, thus Fed and Cheriſh'd, become Impetuous and Strong. And tho he ſees the Folly of his Sins, and is Apprehenſive of the Danger they have brought him into: yet, while theſe Prevail, and he has not yet found out the Means to get the Aſcendant over them; his Conviction ſerves only to Torment him, and his Apprehenſions of Danger alone will not ſet him free. Tho he be ſenſible both of the Reaſonableneſs and the Excellency of Religion, and knows how neceſſary his Repentance is to his Eternal Peace: nay, tho he Reſolves within himſelf, and Vows before his God, to do no more ſo Wickedly: yet *the Good that he would do, that he does not; and the Evil that he would not that he does.* Puſht on by thoſe Impetuous Inclinations which he unadviſed has Cheriſht, like ſo many Vipers to his Ruin: he commits the Sins he vowed to Forbear, he acts againſt the Diſpoſition of his Heart.

Heart, and the Conviction of his Mind: and continues Wicked even when he Wiſhes and heartily Deſires to be Good.

To this great Degree of Spiritual Impotence and Diſability may any Man bring himſelf, by giving way to his Vile Affections in Habitual Iniquities. And yet, by being the Author of his own Miſery, in all his Tranſgreſſions he is without Excuſe. And this is a Reflection, that not only Vindicates Almighty God from all the Vile Imputations that Wicked Men throw upon him, for their Natural Diſpoſitions to Evil: but that alſo ſufficiently repreſents the Danger, and Folly of giving way to Temptations; and of yielding to the Allurements of Sin; from the Snares of which it is ſo very Difficult to return.

Vicious Habits

Not to be conquered but by Divine Grace.

II. The Second thing to be conſidered was, that tho Men may bring themſelves into this Great Difficulty and Incapacity of living well: yet the Victory over theſe Diſadvantages is not to be obtained by themſelves alone in their own proper Strength; but

but that they ſtand in need of Divine, Supernatural Aſſiſtance from above. The Determination of their Choice, and the Application to proper Means and Methods, is what every Man has in his own Power by God's Grace; but neither the one nor the other is abſolutely from our ſelves alone; but we are Prevented and Aſſiſted in them both from God; and from his Holy Spirit we have Communicated to us a New Divine Principle of Holineſs, and Obedience.

This is a Truth ſo Plainly, and ſo Expreſly declared in the New Teſtament, that we muſt offer Violence to ſeveral Eaſy and Natural Texts, to Avoid and Diſpute the Certainty thereof. And yet at the ſame time, it is ſo little Conſider'd and Regarded: that it may be, one of the great Cauſes of the Immoralities, and Ungodly Lives of Chriſtians, is owing to their Inconſideration and Neglect of this one Important Truth. They are attackt by the Enemy of Souls, who laies before them ſtrong Allurements and pleaſing Temptations; And while the Inchantments of Pleaſure charm them, and entice their

their ſtrong Deſires; they yield to the Solicitations for a while, and are inclin'd to think that when the Pleaſing Scene is over: their Return will be as Eaſy as their Revolt has been, and their Repentance as much in their own Power as their Diſobedience. And in this vain Conceit they are eaſily betrayed, and too readily conſent to thoſe Temptations: which if they had other Thoughts, and Juſter Apprehenſions, they would more Obſtinately have avoided. For alas, when that Scene is over; Shame, and Anguiſh, and Remorſe oftentimes do that which Deſire did before; and inſtead of Wiſer Purpoſes, and Better Appetites; the Spirit of God has ſo far Abandoned them: that their Inclinations to Evil are ſtronger than at firſt; and call for more Firm and Obſtinate Reſolution to withſtand them. Whereas had theſe Men been but duly ſenſible, that to return from Sin by a true Repentance, is the work only of one Sanctified, and Aſſiſted by the Spirit of God: and not to be accompliſh'd but by that Divine Grace, which by every Wilful and great Tranſgreſſion

is repelled: it is ſo Fooliſh and Prepoſterous a Thing to commit that Sin in a proſpect of Repentance, by the Commiſſion of which, they deſtroy, for a time at leaſt, the Power of Repenting: that the Apprehenſion of this muſt have taught them greater Caution. It is therefore their not conſidering the Neceſſity of Divine Grace, and the Miſchievous Influence of all Wilful Sins to Repel, and Deſtroy it: that becomes the great Inlet to Temptation.

And as by this Diſregard too many Incautious Sinners are betrayed: ſo by the very ſame Inadvertency and Neglect; others in their beſt Vows and Purpoſes are defeated. For while they rely on their own Strength, and confide too much in the Sincere Deſires and Good Intentions of their own Hearts: God, it may be, to make them the more ſenſible of their Dependance on him, and on the Aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit; leaves them to themſelves, and ſuffers them, as he did St. *Peter*, to fall after the moſt hearty Vows; and to diſcover the Frailty of their Nature in thoſe very Inſtances; where they thought them-

themſelves moſt ſecure in their great Sincerity.

Pleaſe not your ſelves then too much in the Uprightneſs of your Thoughts, nor think your ſelves ſafe, and your Converſion certain by being Convinc'd of the Neceſſity thereof, and deſirous that it ſhould be: but if ever you hope to bring thoſe Good Deſires to Good Effect; know that you muſt have Divine Strength and Aſſiſtance communicated from God, and a New Principle of Holy Living deriv'd upon you from his Holy Spirit.

This is what Chriſt intended when he told *Nicodemus*, that *except a Man be born again of Water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.* To be *Born again* is but a Metaphorical Expreſſion to denote a Change of our Manners and Converſation. And when our Bleſſed Lord imputes this New Birth to the *Water and Spirit:* it is plain that he muſt intend, that the Powers of that Change muſt be from the Divine Aid and Aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, which he purchaſed at his Death, and in the Sacrament of Baptiſm Co- John 3. 5.

venants to beſtow. Agreeable to which **St. Paul** ſpeaking of the Privileges of that Chriſtian Sacrament expreſſes them by *the Waſhing of Regeneration, and the Renewing of the Holy Ghoſt.* And he not only tells us of the *Holy Spirits dwelling in us*, but he poſitively declares, that we become *One with God and Chriſt*, by the Mediation of that Holy Spirit, and muſt look on that as the *Pledge of our Hope*, and the *Seal of our Redemption. For if any Man has not the Spirit of Chriſt, he is none of his.* And when the ſame Apoſtle bids us ſometimes to be *filled with the Spirit*, and *to Walk after the Spirit*, and *to Live after the Spirit*; and at other times Cautions us with Affectionate Importunity, not to *Grieve the Spirit*, nor *Quench the Spirit*, nor *Reſiſt the Holy Ghoſt*: I think it would puzzle the Profoundeſt, and moſt Piercing Underſtanding to give any Plain, and Natural Interpretation of theſe Words; but what muſt Suppoſe the Holy Ghoſt to be the Author of our Sanctification, and that Bleſſed Aſſiſtance which we receive from him to be the Divine Principle of Holy Liv-

Tit. 3. 5.

Rom. 8. 9.

1 Cor. 12. 13.

Eph. 4. 4.
Eph. 5. 18.
Rom. 8. 1.

Gal. 5. 16.

Eph. 4. 13.
1 Theſ. 5. 19.

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ing. And that, by Conſequence, we are both in Duty, and in Wiſdom bound, to Obey, to Cheriſh and Improve all thoſe Good Motions and Inſtigations with which he graciouſly Prevents us: and not by any Obſtinate, Wilful, and Choſen Enormities, to Grieve this Spirit, or provoke him to withdraw himſelf.

More might be ſaid on this Subject, but, tho I am heartily Solicitous that every Chriſtian ſhould be ſenſible of their Want, and of their neceſſary Dependance upon God for his Aſſiſtances in Holineſs: yet I think what I have alleg'd already is enough to convince all Impartial Men, and wants no great Enlargement. And when their own Experience of this want of Grace, and the Expreſs Declarations of Scripture that it is exhibited to us from God by the Holy Spirit, make Men deeply Senſible, and Apprehenſive, that their Powers and Capacities of doing Good are from him: then it will be proper to offer to their Conſideration, the

How this Grace may be obtained, and improved.

III. And Laſt thing Propoſed to be ſpoken to, *viz.* By what Means this Divine Aſſiſtance may beſt be Obtained, and Improved to the Subduing all Vicious Affections, and Deſires; and ſo, that we may be enabled by it to bring forth the Good Fruits of Righteouſneſs. For though this Divine Aid is the Gift of God, and therefore called Grace, becauſe given Freely, without any Previous Merit on our Part: yet it is not to be caſt away like a Pearl before Swine; nor to be forc'd on thoſe that impiouſly Deſpiſe it, and will make no other Uſe of it than to turn again and trample on it. But rather, as becomes the End and Purpoſe for which it was Deſign'd; it is exhibited to thoſe that Want it; Increas'd and Multiplied on thoſe that Thirſt after and Seek it; and Continued ſtill with great Abundance to all thoſe that carefully Improve it. It never was intended to act Irreſiſtibly upon us, and to do the Work it ſelf alone, either without our Conſent, or againſt our Choice: but to ſupport the Willing, and Confirm the Weak;

Weak; and that thoſe who *Hunger and Thirſt after Righteouſneſs*, and Languiſh under the Powers of Overruling Appetites, and Inſulting Luſts: by this Divine Help might be Delivered, and put into a Capacity to get the Victory. But then, all thoſe that Profeſs to Thirſt after, and to be Deſirous of it: muſt expreſs the Sincerity of their Hearts, and the Earneſtneſs of their Deſires by a diligent Application to all the Probable Means of obtaining it. Some of which are theſe that follow.

1. Fervent and Conſtant Prayer. *By Prayer.* And I mention this in the Firſt place, becauſe it is that which Chriſt himſelf has particularly directed us to in this very Caſe, and on this very Account, *Watch and Pray that ye enter not into Temptation.* Mat. 16. 41. And the Reaſon with which he enforces this Exhortation is ſuch, as particularly ſhows the neceſſity of this Duty, in that it is founded on our Dependance on God for the Succeſs of our Endeavours, and the Vanity of all our Attempts while we Rely only on our own Strength and Good Intentions. *Watch and Pray that ye enter not into*

Temptation: the Spirit, or Mind, may be *Willing*, *but the Fleſh* or Affections of the Body are *Weak*, unleſs Aſſiſted and Supported from above. If our own Strength was of it ſelf ſufficient for us, Watchfulneſs would be neceſſary, but Prayer would not. And in the Recommendation of that Duty, Chriſt ſuppoſes our help to come from him to whom we make our Supplications.

And when he purpoſely deſign'd to ſet forth the Efficacy of Prayer, and the Influence which our Devout Addreſſes have to prevail on God, and procure his Bleſſings to us: he particularly directs the Application of it, to the Graces of his Holy Spi-

Mat. 7. 11. rit. *If ye being Evil know how to give Good Gifts unto your Children: how much more ſhall your Heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask it?*

In all your Wants therefore, Spiritual as well as Temporal, be mindful of this Religious Duty; and while you Languiſh under the Impetuous Powers of Depraved Appetites and Vicious Inclinations, and Deſire God's Help and Aſſiſtance to Overcome them:

them: *by Prayers and Supplications let your Requeſt be made known to God.* Phil. 4. 6.

Here will our Saviour's Promiſe effectually be fulfilled; *Ask and ye ſhall have, ſeek and ye ſhall find, knock and it ſhall be opened unto you.* Mat. 7. 7. And in all your Devout Petitions, be ſure that the Ardour and Earneſtneſs of your Prayers be ſuitable to the greatneſs of your Wants; and that the Conſtancy of your Supplications bear ſome Proportion to the Hainouſneſs of thoſe Repeated, and Habitual Sins, whereby you have incens'd his Wrath. The former are Neceſſary to Vindicate the Heartineſs and Sincerity of your Deſires; in that ardent Affections always produce vigorous Attempts; and he that is ſolicitous to Obtain will always be Earneſt and Importunate in his Requeſts. The latter is neceſſary with reſpect to God, who cannot in Wiſdom proſtitute ſo Valuable, ſo Ineſtimable a Favour to every Faint Wiſh, or every Raſh or Haſty or Inconſiderate Petition of Fickle and Inſtable Men. He has no other way to make known the high Price that he ſets upon this ſignal Mercy and Grace; and the ſe-

vereReſentments that he bears againſt all thoſe who Impiouſly and Profanely trample on it: than by withholding it from thoſe that have deſpiſed it; and letting their Difficulty in the Recovery of it, bear ſome proportion to the Vile Contempt, and Scornful Diſregard with which it has been treated.

If then your Wants are great, and your Corrupt Affections ſtrong, and you ever hope to get the Maſtery over them; do not think that this can be done by a few Tranſient Wiſhes, in Haſty, Short, and Inconſtant Devotion: but be Frequent, and Fervent, and Conſtant in it, and remember that here alſo it may be ſaid, that *he that endureth to the End ſhall be ſaved*. It would argue Raſhneſs, and too great a Want of Providence and Caution, to truſt our Fortunes all at once in the Hands of a new Reviving Bankrupt, by whom we had ſuffered much before: and it muſt be wiſer far, by leſs Degrees and ſmaller Trials to make new Proof of his Probity and Fortune. So in the Adminiſtration of Divine Grace, it would look like Raſhneſs, and expoſe

poſe the Bleſſing as of little Worth: to Proſtitute it too ſlightly to every faint Profeſſor of Repentance; and to the ſhort fits of Zeal of every relenting Criminal by whom it has been ſcorned. Here then ye *have need of Patience*, that you may inherit the Bleſſing; and by Conſtant Supplications only can ye overcome. But

2. Another thing neceſſary to the Attainment of that Grace, whereby you become Able to keep your Religious Vows, and do the Good that you Deſire: is to Prepare your ſelves for the Inhabitation of this Holy Spirit. And that particularly by cleanſing your ſelves from all Impurity; and by abſtaining from all Vile Intemperance, and Riotous Exceſſes; and all manner of great Enormities. For when the Apoſtle expoſtulates thus; *What Fellowſhip hath Light with Darkneſs, and what Communion has Chriſt with Belial?* In that way of arguing, he teaches us to Conſider, that in things that are to be Cloſely and Mutually United; there muſt be an Harmony or Agreement in their Nature, and a near Reſemblance in their

By abſtaining from all Enormous Practices.

2 *Cor.* 6. 14.

their Diſpoſitions and Qualifications. Without this, inſtead of Unity, there will be nothing but Diſcord, and Enmity, and a Conſtant Tendency to Separation.

And thus it is in the Caſe before us. Light and Darkneſs are not leſs reconcileable than Sin to God, and the Pollutions of Enormous Senſuality and Debauchery, to the Reſidence of his Holy Spirit in us. St. *Paul* upon this very account diſſuades the *Corinthians* from Fornication and Uncleanneſs; that our *Bodies are the Temples of the Holy Ghoſt*, by reaſon of that Divine Grace communicated to us, and to all Chriſtians. *Know ye not that your Bodies are the Temples of the Holy Ghoſt, that is in you? And if any Man defile the Temple of God, him will God deſtroy.* The *Corinthians* knew very well, that the Place of Gods peculiar Reſidence and Abode was ſo Reaſonably, and Neceſſarily to be kept free from all Pollution: that whatever unclean thing entred into the Temple, it was to atone for the Offence by its Death. And it was from thence eaſy to apprehend, how Offenſive to God, and how Fatal to Man

1 Cor. 3. 16, 17.

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it muſt be, to pollute thoſe Bodies by ſenſual Uncleanneſs, which he had conſecrated to himſelf by the indwelling of the Holy Ghoſt.

Common Reaſon indeed may teach us, that an Holy God muſt and will have an Holy Habitation; or that he will Remove, and Quit, and Abandon the Choſen Place of his Abode. Sooner may Cold incorporate with Fire, and Darkneſs have her chief Seat and Reſidence in the Sun: than the Pure, and Holy, and Divine Spirit of God dwell in that Debaucht Body which is only a Sink of great Iniquity and Uncleanneſs. Therefore it is that St. *Paul* exhorts; *Be not drunk with Wine wherein is Exceſs, but be filled with the Spirit.* Plainly leaving us to infer, that he who is the one, cannot have the other alſo. And St. *Peter* admoniſhes us; *Dearly beloved, I beſeech you, as Strangers and Pilgrims, to abſtain from Fleſhly Luſts becauſe they War againſt the Soul.* Eph. 5. 18. 1 Pet. 2. 11.

Be not guilty then of ſuch palpable Deluſion, and groſs Impoſture to your ſelves, as vainly to conceit; that the Spirit of God will Reſide with you, or his Grace be Communicated

nicated to you; or the Powers of Sin, and the force of your Corrupt Affections ever be deſtroyed: while you Knowingly and Wilfully continue in thoſe Vices that are Repugnant to the one, and give Strength and Protection to the other. Neither be guilty of that deteſtable Hypocriſy before God, as to pray for that Divine Grace of Sanctification; which your obſtinate Iniquities cannot admit. Every indulg'd Vice proves your Deſires of it to be Diſſembled, and in all your Prayers for it gives your Tongue the Lie: and will have much greater Influence to Grieve and Repel; than your moſt Earneſt and Importunate Supplications to obtain it.

By Religious Exerciſes.

3. Beſides all this, it will be convenient alſo, that you may diſpoſe and prepare your Hearts yet more diligently to attend on thoſe Holy and Religious Exerciſes, which the Goſpel has appointed and ordained as ſo many Inſtrumental Helps and Means to drive out all Corrupt Affections, and Senſual Deſires. Chriſt in one of his Parables, compares the Condition of a Man that is returned from

from a State of Sin and Iniquity, to a Houſe Swept, and Garniſht. Firſt *Swept*, and then *Garniſht*; Intimating to us thereby; that the Place of God's Reſidence requires not only Cleanlineſs, but Ornaments. And ſuch are all thoſe Holy Fires, and Warm Affections, and Zealous Diſpoſitions to the Love of God, and Holineſs: which by Faſting, and Prayers; by Hearing and Reading God's Holy Word; by Devout Thoughts and Pious Meditations are enkindled. Theſe give ſuch ſtrong Diſpoſitions to that which is Good, as the Holy Spirit of God will always Cheriſh and Confirm. Theſe Things awaken the Conſcience, and Enlighten the Mind, and direct our Thoughts; and raiſe our Natural Capacities and Powers; and give that Vigour to the Soul, and to all the Good Reſolutions of it: without which the Spirit of God would not move them, but all the Tenders of Divine Grace would become Unprofitable. Mat. 12. 24.

In former Times when Prophecy and Divination were frequent among the Jews, it is obſervable, that often they came not upon them 2 King. 3. 15.

them without Muſic, to Elevate their Minds, and raiſe their Spirits, and Work up their Thoughts and Imagination to a pitch ſuitable for that Divine Illumination. What Muſic was to them, Religious Exerciſes may prove to us; They will ſo enlighten our Minds, and awaken our Conſciences and turn our Affections: as will make us the fitter to receive the Holy Spirit, and engage him to beſtow upon us, more abundant Portions of his Grace.

Diſdain not then your Attendance on, and Application to all thoſe, which tho call'd but Inſtrumental, Duties; yet as Inſtruments of Holineſs, and Means of Grace are not to be deſpiſed, but to be obſerved with Zeal and Conſtancy. And above all, have a ſpecial regard to the Holy Scriptures; that Sacred Book which was Dictated, and Indited by the Holy Ghoſt on purpoſe for our Edification; and as our Apoſtle juſtly ſpeaks of it, *is pro-*

2 Tim. 3. 16. *fitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Inſtruction in Righteouſneſs*, and able to *make us in all things Wiſe unto Salvation.* But

4. Tho

4. Tho all Religious Exerciſes are carefully to be attended to: yet I would particularly recommend Conſtancy and Zeal in the Worſhip of God. And I diſtinguiſh this Worſhip from the Prayers, and Supplications mentioned above: as they reſpect our ſelves; and are directed to God chiefly in regard to our own Wants and Miſeries; which is the proper Buſineſs of our Cloſets, and Private Devotions. But this reſpects more peculiarly the Glory and Honour of our Creator, and conſiſts chiefly in that Devout Homage and Humble Adoration, which tho always Due, and every where to be given him; yet more particularly make up the Buſineſs of our Publick Service and Solemnities. There it is, that we not only pour out our Prayers and Supplications before him: but with theſe by all outward Acts of Awe and Veneration, we avow our Dependance on, and own our Submiſſion to him. In humble Confeſſions we acknowledge our Iniquities; and in joyful Hymns of Thanks and Hearty Praiſe, we proclaim his Wiſdom and Adore his Goodneſs. We

By the Zealous Worſhip of God.

confeſs his Dominion; ſubmit to his Authority; and bow before his Tremendous Majeſty and Power; admiring all his Wonderful Exerciſes of it, and rejoycing in all the Comforts and Bleſſings that we enjoy therein.

This Publick Worſhip and Homage are ſo peculiar a part of that Honour which we owe him; ſo much the End of our Creation, and the Buſineſs of every Creature: that no Man can with Reaſon look for, or expect any peculiar Bleſſing, or any Eminent Favour from him, that is unmindful of ſo Reaſonable, ſo Neceſſary a Duty. A Duty that God rigorouſly Requires, and that Mankind are all ſtrictly bound to pay. And his Wiſe and Righteous Rule is this;

1 Sam. 2. 30. *Them that Honour me I will Honour*, and Favour, and Bleſs with all my Bleſſings Spiritual and Temporal: *but he that Deſpiſes me ſhall be as lightly eſteemed by me*, and as far from Receiving my Divine Favours and Mercies; as he is from Honoring and Acknowledging his Obligations to the Divine Author and Giver of them. This is a Righteous Decree, and founded on ſo much Reaſon: that

that we may depend upon it, a Juſt and a Wiſe God will never act againſt it.

And it were happy for thoſe who are concern'd in it if they would Seriouſly lay it to heart. For let us Expoſtulate a little with them, or let them Conſider with themſelves. If the Powers of Sin are too Strong for Man to conquer of his own Natural Strength, and if, as the Scripture tells us Expreſly, *the Spirit of God muſt dwell in us*, and we muſt derive from that a New Principle of Holy Living: can theſe Men expect to be thus Bleſſed, thus Favour'd, thus Sanctified, and Enrich'd by him; that have but little Zeal towards him, and no concernment for his Honour? Nay that inſtead of Honour and Adoration, turn all the Holy Days, and Solemn Seaſons of his Divine Worſhip into Profaneneſs, and make them the Choſen, the Appointed Times for Buſineſs, or for Sports. Does not this look like a Weariſomneſs towards God, and a Loathing of his Worſhip? Does it not plainly ſpeak a Contempt of his Authority, a Diſdain of his Commands, and Undervaluing of his

Protection, and a Disregard to his Blessings, and proceed from a direct Spirit of Profaneness and Irreligion? And can these men then expect to have the Holy *Spirit of God dwell in them*, and its Sanctifying Graces plentifully communicated to them? Yes, if there were neither Wisdom, nor Vengeance, nor Severity with God, or that he set no Value on the Blessing; If he was either Insensible of their ill Treatment, or Unmindful of his own Dispensations; then something might be hoped for. But if those only that Honour him can justly expect such Favours from him: these Men can have but little Hope.

When Mankind first Revolted from his Worship, and gave the Homage which was due to him alone, to some new Erected Idol: the Apostle tells us, that in his Just Indignation, *he gave them up to Vile Affections, and to a Reprobate Mind, to do those things that are not Convenient.* And is not Profaneness equal to Idolatry, and an obstinate Contempt of all Divine Worship worse than only a heedless Mistake in the Object of it? Why then should not these Men expect the same

Rom. 1. 26, 28.

Fate?

Fate? We are not then at all to Wonder, if we find ſuch Profane Sinners as theſe, Blinded in Errors, and Infatuated in their Principles; and *led away by divers Luſts* to very great Enormities. This is not ſtrange, when inſtead of obtaining that Sanctifying Grace by which they ſhould get the Victory over their vile Affections: they are rather abandon'd of that God, whom they diſdain'd to Worſhip, and left under the Power of their Indulg'd Iniquities; in the Influence of them *to be led Captive by the Devil at his Will.*

If therefore you have any Senſe of the Reaſonableneſs of Religion, and of the Neceſſity of that Divine Grace whereby you may be enabled to live up to it: Worſhip God, and lay a Good Foundation of ſound Hope for ſo Great, and ſo Valuable a Bleſſing; by a Conſtant Regard to his Honour, and a Zealous Concernment for his Holy Service. But

By frequent receiving the Holy Sacrament.

5. While I am ſpeaking, of our Obligations to Worſhip God, I muſt not forget that, which is the Prime Part, and Principal Act of our Chriſtian Devotion; I mean, that which

we pay at the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The former is incumbent on us as Men, the latter as Chriſtians. The former is the great End of our Creation, and that which we all owe, for the Being we have received from God the Father; the latter we are bound to for the more Valuable Bleſſing of our Redemption, and in it we moſt ſolemnly make Profeſſion of our Faith in, and our Love, and Zeal, and great Veneration for his Son.

And we may be ſure, that no Duty whatſoever can be more Efficacious to procure from God the Graces of his Holy Spirit: than a Devout and Solemn Commemoration of the death of that his Son; who by Dying has procured this Bleſſing of Sanctification for us, and by his Promiſes entitled us unto it. This Grace indeed is one of the ſignal Privileges, and Extraordinary Advantages of our Redemption; by which, we not only have our Guilt Atoned, and our Tranſgreſſions Expiated: but are Sanctified and Cleans'd, and Purified by the *waſhing of Regeneration, and the Renewing of the Holy Ghoſt.* And where

where can we more reaſonably hope that this, one of the two Prime Bleſſings that our Dear Redeemer has purchaſed for us, ſhould be exhibited to us: than in that Religious and Holy Feaſt which he himſelf juſt before his Death inſtituted and ordained in Commemoration of his Paſſion. That Bread which he brake, and which he has in this Holy Supper ordained to be the Repreſentative of his Body broken on the Croſs, gives us a fair Repreſentation of the Benefits and Bleſſings Communicated; and teaches us as plainly to expect therein, *the Strengthening and Refreſhing of our Souls*: as we from the Bread we Eat, and the Wine we Drink, look for the Support and Nouriſhment of our Bodies.

The Bread of this Holy Table is that, of which it may truly be ſaid, that *it came down from Heaven*, Jo. 6. 50. as did that Chriſt who is therein exhibited to us. And of which *whoſoever eateth* Worthily and Devoutly *ſhall never die*, but live in Sincere and Faithful Obedience to God's Will in this World; and in the World to come Live and Reign with him for

ever. In this Divine Ordinance then it may be truly ſaid, *that we Dwell in Chriſt, and Chriſt in us; we are one with Chriſt and Chriſt with us*: We by Faith, and Hope, and Love, and Zeal; and He by the Communications of his Grace.

Nor is it at all Neceſſary to run this Sacrament up to a Charm, or Myſtic Spell, to make good the Truth of all that is here ſaid of it. For when Chriſt himſelf who inſtituted this Supper and impoſed it upon us as a Duty, and a Means of Salvation; at the ſame time is Pleaſed to Promiſe and Covenant thus to recompence our Compliance with his Will: we have all the Reaſon imaginable to Believe him, and to Confide that it ſhall be with us according to his Word. Indeed its very agreeable to the Common Notions of Mankind that it ſhould be ſo. For where can we more reaſonably Believe or Suppoſe, that God will Favour us with the Light of his Countenance, and vouchſafe us the Choiceſt of his Bleſſings upon Earth, ſuch as this Divine Grace is: but then and there where we approach him, with the Pro-

Profoundeſt Reverence and moſt Affectionate Devotion. And where is that? Is it not here that we ſhew the moſt Devout Contrition, and make the moſt humble Confeſſion of our Sins, and the moſt Solemn Profeſſion of our Faith? Is it not here that we pour out our moſt Earneſt Prayers; and Fervent ſtrong Deſires: that we offer up to God the moſt Hearty Praiſes, and make the moſt Solemn and Firmeſt Vows? Where then can we better, where ſo juſtly look for large and plentiful Communications of Divine Grace: as in this Holy Supper which Chriſt has inſtituted as one of the moſt Sacred Means of Communion between God and us; and in which we uſually, we always if Sincere, are moſt eminently Serious and Devout? In a Word, Whoever Conſiders, that the true Efficacy of this Sacrament proceeds from the Generoſity and Fidelity of God, who promiſes thus to Recompence our Zeal: may ſee ſo much certainty of Succeſs in his Devout Supplications here made, as cannot but diſcover both the Wiſdom and the Advantage of frequent Communion; and the Ne-

Neceſſity of it to all thoſe who would *Grow in Grace*, and become *ſtrong in the Lord, and in the Powers* of Obedience and Holineſs.

By conſtant Watchfulneſs and Circumſpection.

6. *Laſtly*, To all our Prayers and moſt Devout Petitions, we muſt add Watchfulneſs and Circumſpection in all our Converſation. *Watch and Pray that ye enter not into Temptation*, is, we remember, our Saviour's Rule. And as by joyning theſe two together he plainly teaches us, that *we are not ſufficient of our ſelves*, but Depend on him for his Divine Concurrence and Aſſiſtance: So in the Recommendation of Watchfulneſs and Prayers too, he teaches us, that it is no more than Concurrence and Aſſiſtance which we muſt receive from him. Not ſuch Incontroulable, and Irreſiſtible Operations as ſhall Act in us without our joynt Endeavours, or do the Work alone, when we are Careleſs and Remiſs, Negligent and Incautious. But ſuch ſupply as is fit for thoſe to have, that are Willing but very Weak; and Deſirous to Live well, but without Gods help Unable ſo to do. We depend on his Holy Spirit for the Succeſs of our

our Religious Attempts, as we do on his Providence for a Good Event of our Induſtry and Labours. Both may be had, and both may be ſecured by right and proper Methods; by the joynt Concurrence of our own Care, and his Bleſſing with it: but if we either Omit the One, or Neglect the Other, all our Expectations are Vanity and Preſumption, and as ſuch ſhall certainly deceive us.

We are then it ſeems no more to Tempt God in the Diſpenſations of his Grace, than in the Adminiſtrations of his Providence. And yet we do Preſumptuouſly make Trial of him, whenever we make Profeſſions of Zeal towards Holineſs, and ſeem deſirous of his Aſſiſtance to enable us: and yet are not Watchful and Circumſpect over our ſelves. As he, that in reliance of God's Protection, ſhall throw himſelf from a Precipice with Expectation to be ſafe; or ruſh without Occaſion into a Noiſom Peſt-houſe, without Apprehenſion of Infection: So is he that Deſires to live a Holy Life; and Truſts in God to be Aſſiſted in it; and yet runs Heedleſly and Knowingly into thoſe Places,

Places, where he foreſees ſtrong Temptations. and Dangerous Allurements to Sin.

Guard therefore all the Avenues of your Hearts, and with Conſtant, Zealous Care avoid all the firſt Approaches to Iniquity. Shun every Company in which you ſuſpect there will be Enticements to do Evil; and abſtain from all Pleaſures, and all Liberties that may but ſeem to border on the Confines of Vice, or take off the Strictneſs of that Guard with which you ought to defend your Innocence. And there eſpecially where you are Conſcious of the Power of your own Inclinations, and where you uſe moſt frequently to be betrayed: there Watch with double Diligence, and uſe more than common Circumſpection; like a Wiſe and Diſcreet Commander; who there places his ſtrongeſt Guard, and there moſt conſtantly attends: where he knows the Fort moſt Weak, and has the greateſt Reaſon to look for an Aſſault.

Theſe are the proper Methods of our Chriſtian Warfare; Theſe are ſome of the Chiefeſt Means whereby thoſe

thoſe who are Conſcious of the Neceſſity of a Holy Life, and Deſirous to Live well: may gain ſuch a Portion of Divine Grace, and in that ſuch a Victory over their Corrupt Affections and Deſires, as ſhall enable them to fulfill the whole Will of God. If indeed their Iniquities have been vilely great, or their Habits in them of long Continuance: their Diſability will be proportionable; their Decays will be great, and call for ſuitable Patience, and Conſtancy, and Care. 'Tis here as in Violent and Laſting Diſtempers of the Body; the Weakneſſes ſo contracted are neither eaſily, nor quickly to be repaired; but require nice Caution, and aſſiduous Circumſpection; without which Men will be in Danger of frequent Relapſes, and very liable to fall back into their paſt Unhappineſs. Care, and Conſtancy, and Patience; Firm Reſolutions and a Vigorous Execution of them, atteſted by due application to God, *who worketh in us to will and to do*, and on whom we depend for ſufficient ſupplies of Strength, may ſecure us in the worſt and moſt Deſperate Caſe. But unprofitable De- Phil. 2. 13.

Deſires alone will not avail in any; nor a Conviction of the Reaſonableneſs and Neceſſity of Religion ever atone for the Neglect and Non-obſervance of it. *If we know theſe things, Happy are we if we do them*; but to ſee the Excellencies of Obedience, and the Comforts of Holineſs, and the Peace and Joy of a Religious Life, and not attain to it: is but a Foretaſt of that, which will one day be ſuch Mens moſt Mortifying Tribulation. I mean, to behold the Glories of Heaven at a Diſtance, and the Righteous with *Lazarus* in *Abraham's* Boſom Rejoycing with God: and while they behold and Admire theſe Glories afar off, to find themſelves thruſt out. And if this be a Deplorable thing, and fit to be Lamented: let your Earneſt, your Vigorous Endeavours after Grace and Holineſs, be anſwerable to your Deſires and Expectations of ſo ineſtimable a Reward.

The

The Close.

AND now my Brethren, what is there yet wanting to Engage Men Universally to be Good? We have seen in our Religion that its Principles are true, and its Evidences certain; its Duties all Reasonable and Excellent; its Practice Beneficial and Advantagious here: and its Rewards more Glorious, its Blisses Unspeakable hereafter. These are moving Considerations, and such, as if Men be not totally abandoned of God, one would think should have some Influence upon them. That the Rewards and Punishments at least should make them to take up *Balaam*'s Wish; and however Wickedly they have lived, yet to desire at last, that *they might Die the Death of the Righteous, and have their Latter end like his.* Numb. 23. 10.

But without Repentance this is not to be Expected; and the Pleasures of Sin are so charming, and the Powers of it so strong; that it seems tho Men see their Danger, and know their Mi-

Misery beforehand: yet they are not able to recover themselves, and return. This is, I doubt, too often their Deplorable and Unhappy Case. And yet, if the Strength and the Powers of Sin were all, the Conquest is not Impossible, nor the Success to be despaired of. For tho of our selves we are Weak and Frail; Instable and Infirm, and in our own Strength not sufficient for so Divine a Work: yet God's *Grace is sufficient for us*, and we are able to *do all things thro Christ that Strengthens us* by his Holy Spirit. And no Man whatever is so far gone in Sin, or in a Case so Desperate: but by a Faithful and Diligent Application to the Means of Grace prescribed above, he may, I think, be certainly restored.

2 Cor. 12. 9.

Phil. 4 13.

The Greatest Danger is from the Charms that Sinful Pleasures are thought to have, by those who are long and much addicted to them. By long Custom and Familiarity these have so endear'd themselves to the Debaucht Appetites and Corrupt Affections of sensual Men; that they often want not only Strength, but Resolution to break thro' them. Their

Their Depraved Appetites and Corrupt Desires are strong, the Rewards and Punishments expected, are lookt on at a Distance, and as a great way off: and all this makes Religion to be thought so Irksome and Grievous; that though they would willingly have their Inheritance and Lot among the Righteous; yet they know not how to forego their Pleasures, and to Brook the Difficulties by which it is to be obtained.

This is the Danger, and here is the Hardship; To bring Men so off from that Extravagant Love, and excessive Fondness to Vice which by long Customs and Habits they have Contracted: that as they see the Necessity and Advantages of Holiness; and would wish to Partake its Comforts: so they may incline to Practice it, and Resolve Vigorously to set about it. Were Men once brought to this, were they once prevailed upon to set about it, with Earnest, and Resolute Endeavours: the Difficulties would soon be conquered, and all its seeming Grievance cease.

But this is what God has left in Man's own Power; and tho he has

by ſtrong Reaſons, and forceable Arguments, and very Moving Conſiderations; by Conſtant Rebukes from within, and frequent Admonitions from without call'd us, and warn'd, and Importun'd us to be Wiſe, and to take the right Way: yet as the trial of Virtue neceſſarily requires the Liberty of Choice, it is with us to make the Determination, and the Generality of Mankind are given to Pleaſures; and Fooliſhly and Wickedly chooſe the worſer part. Hence it came to paſs, that *Noah* a Preacher of Righteouſneſs endeavour'd by conſtant Importunity for the Space of a Hundred and Twenty Years, to bring thoſe Generations to Repentance, and thereby to have prevented that Univerſal Deſolation that fell upon them; but in vain. And *David*, after all his Declarations of the Divine Excellencies of God's Law, is forc'd with Tears to lament his Ungrateful Subjects non-Obſervance of it. *Rivers of Water run down my Eyes becauſe Men keep not thy Law.* And Chriſt himſelf, after the moſt Importunate Invitations, and the ſtrongeſt Conviction, and the moſt Miraculous,

Pſ. 119. 136.

and

and Inconteſtable Evidence of Truth and Divinity: is left at laſt to weep over his Incorrigible People, that would not by theſe Surprizing, and Wonderful Admonitions be reclaimed. And thus his Goſpel too wants its due Succeſs; and muſt, and will want it: where-ever the Pleaſures of Sin inchant, and the Powers of it Conſtrain Men. And how ſhall this be Prevented?

Were the Rewards it Promiſes immediately to be conferr'd, and the Puniſhments it threatens inſtantly to be inflicted: then it is to be imagined Men would not withſtand its Force, nor Deſpiſe, nor Neglect what it offers to their Thoughts. But it has pleaſed Almighty God, that at preſent for the Trial of us, we *we ſhould Walk by Faith, and not by Sight.* And this is not an Unreaſonable Way of treating Reaſonable Creatures, who by Thoughts and Reflections can Repreſent Future Things as Preſent; and if they pleaſe, make them as Efficacious. There is nothing then wanting, but a Wiſe and an Attentive Heart in Man, to Conſider theſe things, and to act with a due regard to them in all his Converſation.

If

If it be pleaded that the Insensibility of the different Consequences of Holiness and Iniquity is a Cause of Mens Impenitency: yet it is such as proceeds from great Heedlessness and vile Inconsideration. Men that will give themselves to think of these things, and to think of them Seriously and Impartially: may find strong Arguments, and Clear Evidences of Truth; and Just and Good Reasons to expect that it shall at last inevitably fare with them, as the Gospel has declared. And to Engage and Perswade Men to this Consideration, is what I chiefly intend by this Discourse. And when to this end we have set before them the Reasons and Principles which the Gospel offers, and given such Instructions, and used such Exhortations and Entreaties as that directs: we have done all that God has put into our Power; and must, as He has done, leave the Determination to themselves.

And yet, Zealous towards God, and affectionately compassionate to our Brethren, and desirous that all Men should be saved: we cannot but be solicitous for the Event, and with great fervency and ardour of Spirit Wish and Pray: *O that Men were Wise, and that they understood this, that they would Consider their latter End. Who is Wise he will reflect on these things? Prudent and he shall know them? For the ways of the Lord are Right; and the Just shall walk in them: but the Transgressors shall fall therein,* and be destroyed.

Deut. 32. 21.

Hos. 14. 9.

FINIS.